



EDMOND DE GONCOURT

Bust by Lenoir, 1890



LA FAUSTIN

BY EDMOND DE GONCOURT

TRANSLATED BY

G. F. MONKSHOOD

& ERNEST TRISTAN



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THIS TRANSLATION

OF

'LA FAUSTIN'

IS

Dedicated

то

PHILIP B. BELTON, ESQUIRE

WITH THE KINDEST REGARDS AND GOOD WISHES

 \mathbf{OF}

G. F. MONKSHOOD

London, 1906.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IT is a pleasant fact to know that some one—somewhere, somehow—attained his heart's desire, while that heart was still young enough to desire the hearts of others. There are very few who can say that "the time and place and the woman"—or success—came to them clasped hand in hand.

Yes, it is pleasant in the twilight of thought—" a theure de l'allongement des ombres"—to feel assured that some one has missed, or evaded, the tragedy of the halfattained, the dominion and tyranny of the demi-gods. Edmond de Goncourt who wrote La Faustin succeeded in life and in literature. What he desired he attained. He was so placed that he heard music such as France alone composes, saw pictures that

could only be born of French brains and brushes, tasted wines that France alone ferments. Out of all this and also out of one great sorrow, his brother's death, grew the brain stuff that produced. La Faustin, a curious study of febrile life, "kisses, wine, and roses," a book that attempts to represent the movement of mind of those living an unusual or non-normal life lived upon an incline and not upon a plane: the life of the liar, the adulterer, the lover and probably the writer if he takes prose very seriously as Goncourt did. And here we may say, in passing, that the French of the Goncourt books is very lovely. It is not strong, it is not the French of Voltaire or Molière and still less does it recall the bitter Chamfort, the biting Rivarol. In the beauty of its clarity it often reminds one of Gautier's A Night with Cleopatra, or his Dead Leman. It is modern French that one can understand, can give a translation or version of. In

recent years there has, painfully, arisen a school of writers, probably led by Huysmans, and the man who says he understands them earns at once the double reputation of being a linguist and a liar. But to speak more intimately of La Faustin. It is one of the four novels written by Edmond de Goncourt, after the death of Jules, and has been a great success abroad, over twenty thousand copics having been published. It is easy to see from his journals and letters that he tried to do a big book, aimed very high and-fell just too short. In the original preface he said that he desired "le dévoilement, d'émotions délicates et de pudeurs raffinés, enfin, toute l'inconnue féminilité du tréfonds de la femme, que les maris, et même les amants, passent leur vie à ignorer . . . voilà ce que je demande." Delicate and modest demand! The book first appeared in serial form and was the most read, the most criticised of all M. de Goncourt's labours. Zola praised it and so did Céard, Huysmans, Daudet and Paul Bourget. To

conclude this note, it should be said that if La Faustin had been translated by Edgar Saltus no one would have been so stupid as to say "who wrote that book?"

G. F. MONKSHOOD.

LONDON, 1906.

LA FAUSTIN

I

IT was a starry night above a phosphorescent sea. In the hollows of the shore, hard-by the mournful wail of the ocean, were stretched shadowy forms, shapeless bodies and featureless faces.

They could just be recognized as two women, one lying full length upon her back, with her arms folded like a crown above her head and her eyes fixed upon the stars; the other one crouching tenderly at the feet of the first, supporting her against her warm body.

Some few steps away from the two women were seated on the ground, back to back, three men whose indistinct faces were for a second illuminated by the glow of a cigar.

From time to time the sea breeze slightly stirred the clothing of the motionless, apparently sleeping, women.

In the presence of the great black canopy of heaven and sea, in the presence of the rhythm of the lazy waves, in the warmth of the night and the languor of their souls, conversation between these men and women was dead.

Suddenly in the silence and shadow, à propos of a man's name pronounced more than a quarter of an hour before, the voice of the woman lying at full length, a voice like a souvenir of passion speaking in a dream, replied—

"No, between us there was only a kiss; a kiss, I recollect, given in my dressing-room upon tiptoe above the screen behind which I dressed. He started that same evening for his legation. These English, when they are bad, they are very bad; but when they are good . . .; besides, his mother was a Frenchwoman. Only three months afterwards I went to Brussels on a theatrical tour. He had taken a room for me at a hotel, the Hôtel de Flandres. That night was one never to be forgotten. Love surely does not consist of the lover alone. Do we not sometimes love a man for the circumstances in which we have loved him? Ah, that hotel was a strange place, and music of ineffable softness

seemed to emerge from the walls, and his kisses traversed my skin in sonorous waves, almost torturing me—waves which came forth from beneath the pillow; and there were far-off bursts of harmony which seemed to lift me in his arms to heaven, and I felt something almost divine mingled with his caresses. I have always kept the remembrance of that first night, though it seems stupid to say so, as of the loves of the angels! Yes, the Hôtel de Flandres is next to the church of Saint-Jacques, and the organ, I discovered next day, was built in the wall against which was our bed. I don't know how it happened, but there is one thing certain, he is the only man I have ever really loved!"

"My beloved Faustin, you might spare your protector a little jealousy," said a man, trying with a carcless voice, unsuccessfully, to conceal a wounded heart.

"My friend," replied the woman in a serenely ironical tone, "the sea air makes you lose the sense of proportion; you so practical a banker too. Remain the business man of great intelligence that you are. We live together, do we not? We are not lovers, are we?"

La Faustin turned her head a little to look

toward the horizon, where the little patches of dark cloud seemed to lie back beyond the pale luminous line of the ocean like an unending frieze of chimera carved out of ebony; then she resumed these confidences which the beautiful lovesome night seemed to invite.

"There was a sequel to this episode; William took me some time afterwards to a castle in Scotland. I cannot say in what county it was situated, and I have no wish to remember. I love the recollection of the vague effacement, of the kind of somnambulism in which I lived during that time. A castle in a state of ruin in the midst of a forest which diminished year by year, made a dwelling in a forest of pale-green verdure shaken by the rough, moaning winds of autumn. But there was one very charming thing in this castle, a flock of white peacocks that came at dawn and perched upon the steps, terraces and windows. But you can have no idea of the effect produced at nightfall by these great birds, white and still, with the old grey stone and mossy walls. At the hour, too, when the moon rose and shone through all the embrasures of the windows, they appeared like the white souls of the departed dressed in bridal robes of white

satin. It is singular that in stage fairyland I have never seen a scene like that. This existence was all the same very strange; sometimes I seemed hardly sure that I was alive. It was the best month of my life—time without an end, days without hours."

"And charming nights," murmured the woman seated at La Faustin's feet.

A little pat with the heel of her boot was La Faustin's reply, and she immediately received a laughing kiss upon her ankle from the woman, as she said, "Come, little sister, give us an idea of them."

"That is all, my dear," said La Faustin, jumping up; "and I believe it is time to go and have tea."

"Dear madam," said the man who up to then had remained silent, "when do you make your début in *Phædra* at the Théâtre Français?"

"In two months, I think, ten weeks at the most."

"Ladies," said the man, bowing, "any commissions for Carsonac?"•

"Thank you, none," said La Faustin's sister; "my sweetheart will see me the day after to-morrow."

"Good-bye, Blancheron; good-bye, young

Luzy. I am returning at once to Havre for the night train."

La Faustin took her sister's arm, and followed by the two friends, she ascended the Sainte Adresse, a hilly little street, towards a new stone house.

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UPON a centre table, between two bags of bonbons, one bearing the stamp of Boissier, the other the stamp of Siraudin, was placed a dish of partridge and a salad smelling of vinegar.

• In the boudoir, where they breakfasted, women's clothing was lying upon the divan which ran round the room, and in the corners pieces of porcelain and valuables of all sorts were mixed up with worthless imitations; a jar in which a spun glass Deburau threatened every moment to lose its balance under the lazy blows of the tail of a large gold-fish, which was for ever turning round and round, stood there.

Behind the clock, which was a little wonder of the last century, depicting the statuette which excited the amorous adoration of a Pygmalion, kneeling at its feet upon the white marble, was the card of an actor of the Palais Royal. A half-open door made one suspect, from its suspicious shadow, a dressing-room not yet arranged, rumpled serviettes, and halves of dried citrons; and from this dressing-room musk perfumes emerged to mingle with the smell of cabbage and cigarette-ends of the dining-room.

Three women seated, one on a chair, another on an ottoman, the third upon a stool, close up to La Faustin's sister on either side, ate partridge while taking a chicory leaf from the saladbowl, or a bonbon from the bottom of one of the two bags. The full-breasted one of the company, whose dress was half unfastened to give herself more comfort, had taken off her corset, which hung upon a chair.

This woman was the fat Moumoute, an old courtesan with aspirations to respectability, who had ended by marrying the leader of the orchestra of the Crimea Boulevard; a woman of forty, who, in the midst of her stoutness, had preserved her gentle, childlike eyes.

The youngest, a girl of seventeen or eighteen, had the dainty nose, cunning face and vicious intelligence of the Parisian, a husky voice, a conversation interspersed with medical terms. She lived for the time being by translating Darwin for the use of reviews and newspapers, and answered to the childish name of Lillette.

The third was a woman of twenty-six, a silent woman with impatient tremors of the body, a soft pallor which coloured every moment with the passing animation of the blood. She was wearing the costume she wore every day, out or at home, a dressing-gown of white quilting, the shoulders of which were covered by a little shawl of Chinese crépon, tied behind in a childish way; it was a toilette which made her pale, vivacious beauty radiate. In the open carriage in the morning she had covered herself with a fur. After spending a few years dressing society women, Josephine was now kept by a large horse-dealer of the Champs Élysées.

Around the table came and went a servant with a mournful, middle-aged face, resting her knee familiarly upon the edge of the ottoman. She had upon her cheeks some rouge stolon from her mistress, and a scratch ran across her

face. She dragged her weary feet along in a pair of Turkish slippers, and swore and slammed the door when the bell rang or she received an order which sent her into the antechamber.

"The piece is still running?" hazarded the fat woman between two mouthfuls.

"Oh yes," replied the mistress of the house.

"We are still in the five thousands, the new manager told me yesterday when I ran after him in the green-room," said the flutc-like voice of a little boy of seven, half hidden by a collar of Chantilly lace.

Lying upon a corner of the ottoman, with his head down and his legs crossed in the air the boy was making nails with a little file. His collar straight, the handkerchief passed between his shirt and vest, in fact, everything upon the child, from the spotless soles of his shoes to the parting of his hair, gave him the air of an old swell. The little chap had already entered into the life of this world, taking part in its conversations, listening to its confessions, and being a witness of its strife. He was a wretched child, brought like a pretty little animal into private suppers half awake and then forgotten;

a boy of the café, who was taken back at daybreak to his mother.

"You see, Moumoute," resumed the mother, "with the effect of the electric light upon the poisoning scene in the fourth act, the hundred performances are as good as over."

"And the revival of the other, when does that take place at the Châtelet?"

"Next week; and that will make seven hundred francs due to me. Yes, he gives me five hundred francs for original performances and two hundred francs for revivals. This existence is no good. In reality, my dears, I was born to marry a Laruette and keep in the provinces a table d'hôte for actors.

"But I want to go to Turin," she said, suddenly darting across the boudoir, then in the midst of her dart turning suddenly and facing her friends, she added, brandishing her fork, upon which was a mouthful of partridge, "I might perhaps attract the King!"

And directly, "Lillatte, blush, or out you go!"

"I would rather blush," said Lillette, with really promising candour and effrontery.

La Faustin's sister resumed her seat, and mournfully passing her hand four or five times at the back of her neck: "Alas, what is that ugly thing which Moumoute has where my hand is? Yes, the hump of forty; it seems to me that on some days I feel ten years older than I ought. But there is some one ringing the bell."

"Madam, the Homburg doctor," said the servant, half opening the door of the boudoir.

"Here is Ragache," said La Faustin's sister as a gentleman appeared behind the servant, walking with bent legs, with gestures imploring the silence of the four cardinal points.

"Ragache, Ragache," was like an echo in three different modulations from the mouths of the three women.

Ragache was a man about forty, who made jokes with features convulsed with laughter, and painfully extracted from the heel of his boots paradoxes, puns, words without any sense, in the imitations of actors.

"Tut, tut, tut," said Ragache, as he advanced into the boudoir as if he were on the stage. "There is a report in the capital that Ponsard is for the moment attracted by Titania; what a masterpiece will result from this flirtation. Let us favour mystery and speak softly."

Then 'suddenly Ragache's eyelids became

circumflex, his mouth shaped itself into an immense O, and turning in a pose of adoration before the fat woman whose throat was exposed to view: "Oh, those little globes, those little globes, and yet to see the large ones, Moumoute, Moumoute, and write a story of two hundred and fifty lines, not one more, upon thy desk, white and palpitating. Speak, order what will be required? Would you make me trample underfoot the principles of '80 there before you? Tell me! No. you would not, Moumoute, refuse my flame. Ah, well," and he made as if to blow his nose and sprinkle the floor with his tears. "One had, or has feeble flesh, but one has at the same time virtuous aspirations. Poiloup the priest was my master; 'Catholicism and Markowski' is my motto!"

- e "Ah, the wonder of Vichy! Give us a little rest, you will weary our understanding. Have you nearly finished your gags for a provincial audience?" cried Lillette, who disliked the man.
- "Silence, silence, young pupil of the School of Spontaneous Generation!"
- "Madam, madam, the sender of asparagus from Aranjuez to the Paris market."
 - "Wherever did I meet him, I wonder?"

murmured La Faustin's sister, as she searched the depths of her memory of her travels.

"Ah, well, this time I am going to Spain."

"Oh, Spain," said Ragache, lifting his eyes, which were blank like those of a hypnotic subject—"land of the sun, of poesy, and of burning love."

Carsonac, the master of the house and the popular author of *Le Crime du Piudarieux*, came in from the inner apartment buttoning his greatcoat over his black coat. He was a fat man with a big stomach, grey hair, a dyed moustache bristling at each corner of his mouth, a sleepy eye veiled with a crinkled lid from which shot out a steely gleam when he made a malicious remark. Carsonac was the type of the bad fat man.

"What! you breakfast here! Why not in the dining-room, Bonne-Ame?"

"It is more cosy; we are more comfortable by ourselves, aren't we, girls?" replied Carsonac's mistress.

"Quite so, I understand; and you have the dressing-room at hand in case of indigestion or an attack of nerves after a friendly explanation. Oh, my dear girl, cover yourself up," said

Carsonac, turning to the woman who was eating without her corset. "How natural you would be in the part of Gargamelle."

Turning to another of his mistress's friends, he said, "Indolent Sarah, you know that the man who loves you is on the point of allowing himself to be captured by the Provençale. I am happy to be the first to bring you the news."

Josephine, whom he had approached, without replying brought forward her head with slow and sinuous inflexions of the neck, and when she was at a level with the fat part of his arm she bit him with her white teeth through his coat.

"That hurts, and it is very stupid."

The woman's eyes smiled slightly as, lighting a large cigar and slipping to the ground from her chair, her white dressing-gown and red shawl spread around her, she remained motionless, lascivious as a well-fed panther.

"In fact, Bonne-Ame, that will not do at all. I am assured that at the Théâtre Français they are preparing the prettiest of failures."

"You annoy me. You know I don't like you to touch," said Bonne-Ame, emphasizing the words.

"And you here too," said Carsonac, turning

to Ragache, whom he had not seemed to see till then.

"For a box at your reproduction."

"A hammock in a draught is all that I have to offer you."

Ragache spoke in the ear of Bonne-Ame so that her friends could hear him say, "Take no notice. This morning he is in a bad temper; but if you are agreeable, very agreeable, I will get you a part. But you know that when he starts doing a thing he does not care about anything else for the time. Will you have a glass of something?"

Ragache picked with a corkscrew a preserved apricot from a jar, and as he ate the yellow fruit, said, "'Stupendum!' as the ancient expression is; I will introduce the effect of biting Mlle. Duchesnoi's tunic."

"Don't you understand?" said Carsonac sharply.

Ragache, still as impassible and serious as a donkey drinking out of a pail, retired with his back towards the door, imitating a Chinaman playing the triangle, and addressed these words to Carsonac as a farewell—

"Most illustrious person, have you reflected

upon the remorse a porter must feel for a crime? Don't you think that for one of your pieces each ring at the bell at night might awaken his conscience?"

Ragache was immediately replaced by a tall blonde boy with the sugarloaf skull of a mystic, holding at his chest a large hat; and as he held out to the people a somnambulist's hand, there was something in his person like the obsequious silhouette of the son of Diaficrus

Carsonac, letting go sharply of the inert fingers he had grasped, said to him brutally, "Really, Planchemol, you ought to have your hands drained; they are so wet they make other people's wet too."

Planchemol moved away from Carsonac with a somewhat scared step, and taking refuge near the women, he sat down near Bonne-Ame, who was at once heard by her friends to say, "He is now your intimate friend, is he not? Ah, well, if you get a book from him, as we desire, I will get him to write a piece with you; and you know, my boy, when once—"

"Sir, it is the small young man who has already called three times to speak to you."

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[&]quot;Show him in."

"M. Gregelu," announced the servant.

A short-sighted beginner, blessed with the double timidity of the short-sighted and the beginner, entered the room, and appeared very much disturbed at the sight of the great man, and by the vague spectacle of the abandoned attitudes of the four women.

"Listen, young man," said Carsonac, without offering him a seat. "All the ideas for plays which are presented to me I at first find detestable. Three or four months pass; the idea which has been suggested to me returns, and, strange to say, I then find it excellent. But I have then entirely forgotten the individual who suggested it to me, and it appears absolutely my own. I give you fair warning."

The small young man, utterly discomfited, began to look for the door.

"Not that way—not that way, young man; that way you will get into these ladies' dressing-room."

"I say, Lillette," said Carsonac, after a few minutes, "when I do you the honour of entrusting you to serious old gentlemen of sixty to take you back to your papa, I should be very grateful if you would sit upon the seat of

the cab, and not upon the old gentlemen's knees!"

"Oh, all right—don't be alarmed. When I sit upon a man's knees it will not be on the knees of a subscriber to the *Manual for the Weak* like yourself."

"Not so bad, little one," admitted Carsonac, who became almost cheerful at her malicious figure of speech.

Then interrupting the undertone conversation of Planchemol with his mistress: "Well, Planchemol, have you had another talk with the shade of Mürger, and has he entrusted you with his last story from beyond the tomb?"

"Yes, yes, there is one, but I can't tell you before these ladies."

"Thanks. It will be a fine state of things in the next world if the ladies who are there can't hear what you have to say!"

Planchemol went quite close to Carsonac and whispered two or three words in his ear.

"Ninny, I am the father of that indecency!"

"Your old servant, sir, is asking for the certificate which you promised him," said the girl.

"Stop. Why did you dismiss him?" said Planchemol, clumsily trying to save his face by putting a word into the conversation.

"An excellent servant," said Carsonac in his nasty voice; "but he came from M. Ricord, and on breaking away did not remember to say good-bye to the friends of Bonne-Ame."

A steely look passed into the blue eyes of Bonne-Ame. Her lips moved without her speaking, and mechanically pouring out the two or three remaining drops from her glass, she began to spread them out upon the oilcloth with a finger upon which an ancient ring representing a strange symbol gleamed.

The evoker of the shade of Mürger had gone out, and Carsonac, standing before the fire-place, began to wrap a white silk handkerchief around his neck.

"What is it, Bonne-Ame?" Carsonac could not help remarking aloud, noting the concentration of his mistress.

"Nothing—oh, nothing; only it is rather curious. A piece of foolishness I had quite forgotten came back to my mind. You would like to know what it was?"

Carsonac's mistress began in a penetrating and

musical voice which seemed to come from her entrails.

"To-night I had a strange dream. I was in a garden, a garden like one sees in a dream. I saw a white shade approach me, and clearly recognized it as that of Rose Cheri. In an instant she was quite near me, and said to me, 'We were friends on earth, why do you shun me now? There is great happiness here, and soon you will come here too.' Behind her I saw two or three dear shades of persons who are dead or dying, and who spoke to me also. After that I woke rather smiling than sad. I thought, so real seemed my dream, that God had allowed Rose Cheri to warn me so that I might have time to prepare. But wrap yourself up well today, there is a north-east wind, and recollect the inflammation of the lungs you had two years ago."

Carsonac became serious, put on his gloves, took them off, put them back in his pocket, made a movement as, if to start, returned to the fire-place, at last decided to go to the door, opened it, shut it, reopened it, and standing on one leg half-way through the door, said to his mistress—

"You did not see me in the garden behind Rose Cheri by any chance, did you?"

The woman, without turning round, made the sign of no with the back of her head, and as soon as she heard her lover's footsteps die away in the distance she burst into a long fit of loud and strident laughter interspersed with short phrases.

"Girls, laugh with me; he will be afraid he is going to die for a week. Oh, you would never guess what a disgusting use he constrains me to make of my body for the success of his machinations. It is good, these gentlemen say, of them to give us money. But this money is indeed ours; the white slave trade, too, they carry on every day with our youth and beauty. It makes no difference whether it is a question of a subvention, the removal of the censor's interdict, of a favour or a declaration. They hurl us at the creatures of power, of ministers, secretaries and valets. Without Flamme-de-Punch do you think that Machin would have had the renewal of his privilege for ten years, and do you think that without Cachalot Chose would have had the collaboration of an excellency? Ah, the old jobbers of the Ministry of State, the scrofulous

young pressmen, the good but tiresome men of the dramatic feuilleton—to what have I had to submit with them! Has he not been put in position to be an officer of the Legion of Honour? Does not that require something?"

Rising and making a fierce rush from one end to the other of the little drawing-room, there escaped from the mistress the confidences of one of those fearful hatreds which often exist in couples bound together by infamous ties—unions which seem to be like two galley-slaves riveted to the same cannon ball and ready to devour each other.

Little by little the angry contortions of the face of Carsonac's mistress subsided. A vulgar gentleness spread over her features. The woman, letting herself fall upon the couch, indolently stretched upon her back, her head hidden in the cushions, began to say with a little twisting of the eye which made it delightfully dim—

"But, girls, each time he imposes a lover upon me for his business enterprises, this is my vengeance: I take one on my own account, one to my taste—just to my taste."

"Oh yes, a little officer," sighed the fat Moumoute in a hiccough, for the moment forgetful of her own husband and marriage; "those men are charming; one can always find in their rooms, biscuit, chocolate, carpet-slippers, and a dressinggown with flaps at the back."

"Who is talking about officers?" resumed La Faustin's sister, with withering contempt; "they are all very well at the period when one makes marks in one's books with leaves gathered in the Alpine valley."

"No, officers are inexperienced, they lack viciousness."

The terrible professor of scepticism, the young woman with blue eyes, and hair blonde as wheat, entered into cynical, ferocious and abominable developments, calmly pouring out of her rosy mouth vulgarities upon everything lovers do not see in love when they love truly.

"Madam, a gentleman with a Polish name, who is a croupier at Monaco."

"Ah, well, for the last time, for Italy and Poland."

"And then the copyist of madam's prayers has just given me this little packet for her."

"Yes, these are the prayers in which I believe, the prayers from my great books which I can carry away like this," Carsonac's mistress said with a considerable amount of embarrassment as she put away the packet.

"Oh," said Lillette in a joking voice, as she pointed to the ceiling in a childish way, "you still believe in the story of Heaven, then?"

"Little carrion!" cried Bonne-Ame, rushing at her as if about to strike her; "although I am only what I am, I forbid that humbug here, child of misfortune; you shall not have my old velvet dress that I promised you!"

A pull hard enough to break the bell sounded in the ante-chamber.

"God of wood, virgin of stone, will these callers to-day never end?" cursed exasperated Mal Fichue, when she at last made up her mind to go and open the door.

"Ah, I know that ring, it is my sister's, when she has one of her severe moral fits on her," murmured Bonne-Ame in a somewhat apprehensive tone.

Almost immediately La Faustin appeared in a black toilette of the greatest distinction. She looked at the three women, whom she greeted as if they were beggars, and simply said to her sister, "I came to look for you."

La Faustin's entrance had frozen the company

into silence, and little timid Bonne-Ame, overcome by the imperial brevity of her remark, took down her hat in a distraught pantomime way.

La Faustin leant one elbow on the mantelpiece, and then she carelessly stretched out behind her the sole of one boot on to the fireless hearth.

"Ah, that is the corsage you had from Mme. Grodesse, auntie," said the little boy, waking up; "did you put it on for me, auntie, your jet bodice?" and he hung his little head at the bottom of the couch, with his shining eyes attracted by her smartness.

The aunt made no reply to her nephew.

- "I am thirsty," said La Faustin suddenly.
- "Will you have champagne?" called out her sister from the dressing-room.
 - " No."
 - "What will you drink, then?"

La Faustin's glance went to the opened bottles, from there unwittingly to the window looking out upon the Megisserie Quay, and was suddenly arrested by something on one side. Then she walked to the table, selected from the bric-a-brac of glasses of all periods a Venetian goblet with milk-white spirals, and said to the servant, "You

see the man below; go and get a cup of cocoa and bring it down to my carriage to me."

"I am ready," said La Faustin's sister.

La Faustin went out with her sister.

"To-morrow you will come and see me?" said Josephine, catching hold of Bonne-Ame by the sleeve as she walked in front of her.

"I can't come to-morrow, dear; it is the old manager's funeral. I must for the sake of appearances go and pray for the old rascal!"

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On the staircase, which happened to be the theatre staircase, the two women were obliged to stand against the wall to let pass a rush, an avalanche of figures, with shoes tipped with iron, who were coming away from a rehearsal down four stairs at a time.

"Excuse me for a moment!" said Bonne-Ame, as she entered the porter's lodge and had a conversation with a groom who was lazily

polishing [a boot by the side of a large dog which had a part in a recent piece.

"Where are you going to take me like this?" asked Bonne-Ame of her sister, as she returned her cup to Mal Fichue.

"I don't know; tell Rayaud to drive toward the Boulevard."

The carriage began to move.

"And this is all the conversation I am to be rewarded with!" said Carsonac's mistress in a minute or two.

"How annoying it is, it is always the same," sighed La Faustin, as she nervously stretched out her arms; "this morning I got up wishing to do something out of the way, I did not exactly know what—to go somewhere. Does not the display of novelties in the shops seem dull to-day? These fancies for things which are not upon the day's programme in the newspapers are a nuisance. Some days you have these extraordinary desires, this sudden hunger for the unexpected, when one does not know or care what will happen."

Then, throwing herself back in the carriage, La Faustin's mouth gave utterance to these lines of Alfred de Musset"Stifle not that burning flame
Thy beating heart cannot contain.
Know you not then, O actress rash,
Those mad cries your heart doth utter,
Of thy thin cheek increase the pallor?
What more trieth God than love of grief?"

"But what has the carriage stopped for?" said La Faustin, leaning out of the window. Her sister saw her suddenly leap up, and in spite of the shouts of the drivers, glide through the mass of traffic, pick something up out of the mud from among the horses' hoofs, and bring it back, wiping it with her lace handkerchief as she did so.

"Yes," she said, as she resumed her seat by her sister, "it is a horse-shoe, that will bring luck; it is the third."

Then the bored woman of a few minutes before became transformed into a woman who put zest into each of her gestures, a caress into each of her words, and laid herself out for effusive coaxing and tender gaiety.

"So, little Maria, you did not like me taking you away from your friends. I have need of you; there are moments in my life . . . if you were not there!"

"Say it at once, I am your honourable vice."

"It is of the distant past. . . . You recollect the confectioner at La Source des Douceurs, Rue Montesquieu; the man who invented, in a room where Arnal used to eat strawberries by the handful, strawberry méringuées which imitated them so well. You were already very bold; and you it was who went to his place to change the halfpence we carned singing in the courtyard of Fontaines; and when there was nothing to eat at home you gave us the courage to sing! Our life as big orphan girls afterwards, a past like that which we have lived together, little Maria, all that cannot be cast off like a dirty chemise."

"Yes, I was the bold and the easy-going; you always led me like a poor sheep. Why? Perhaps it is because you have talent and I have none. Yes, no talent, but the spirit of being led, that is my lot!" said in a jolly tone La Faustin's sister. "And did I not give a clear proof of that spirit when I renounced the theatre the evening before my first appearance? What a thread of brass wire I should have made! While I have carved my career otherwise, and here I am, Providence helping me, with a rank in society of a sort of corrupted housewife,"

said she, with her hands upon her hips in the pose of M. Bertin's portrait of Ingres.

The coachman had stopped before the Madeleine waiting for orders.

- "Don't you recollect, little Maria, that it was you, always you, who found the games and pleasure which amused us?" replied La Faustin.
- "In those primeval times we were easily amused."
- "Come, little Maria, let us have a little imagination to-day. Invent something to do out of the ordinary."
- "I know of no other innocent attractions for the day in Paris, Juliette, than the tour of the lake, the descent into the dungeons of the Invalides, the ascent of the Vendôme Column, and a visit to the monkey-house in the Botanical Gardens; but if it is the other sort of amusement you desire, speak, command, give your orders, and perhaps in that direction your sister will offer you something extraordinary."
- "Don't you think that among the ancients there was more of the unexpected in everyday life than that?" La Faustin replied in discouraging tones.

La Faustin's sister had in her eye a sort of dance of Saint-Guy, which gave evidence of her contempt for this retrospective glance; after which she brutally burst into the tragedienne's reverie.

"Tell me, Juliette, are you not going to appear at the Théâtre Français?"

"No, there has been no rehearsal worth talking about; we have met once only at my house, and that has been all," replied Juliette, as if she were just waking up. "I am far from being well acquainted with the rôle, especially in the way that I am ambitious to play it. Oh! but excellent, perfect, admirable! the way to spend the rest of our day is discovered! Ravaud, Ravaud, to the Batignolles Rue de Lévis 37."

"To the Batignolles; what are you going to see there?"

Suddenly over La Faustin's laughing face the darkening absorption of the work of thought descended; shadows filled her half-closed eyes; upon her forehead, like the soft young forehead

[&]quot;Guess!"

[&]quot;A fortune-teller at a louis."

[&]quot;No, wrong; you will never guess."

of a child learning her lessons, the protuberances above the eyebrows seemed to swell under the effort of attention; along her temples and cheeks there was the imperceptible paling like that caused by a chilly breeze; and the form of words spoken within ran mingled with the vague smile of her half-open lips.

Two or three times La Faustin left her sister's questions unanswered.

"Ah, Juliette, here we are at Number 37."

The two women got out.

"Ravaud, we shall probably be some time," said La Faustin to her coachman.

"Stop, no games in the lodges of these regions!" said her sister.

"Oh, I have had it very clearly explained to me where my man lives."

The two women commenced an ascent, at the end of which they came out on to a large landing.

La Faustin counted the doors in the wall to the left, and stopped before the seventh. She knocked.

Heavy footsteps approached the door, which opened a few inches, and in the narrow space a hook-nose appeared like the back of a

pruning-knife, surmounted by long white hair upon which was a little cap embroidered with golden spangles.

"Ladies, you have doubtless made a mistake," said the old man fearfully, turning his head and addressing strange hushes to the interior of the room.

"No. You are M. Athanassiadis, are you not? and this is a line which one of our mutual friends has given me for you;" and she put into his hand the card of an illustrious Academician.

"Oh, come in, ladies," said the old man, after glancing at the card; "but glide like this on account of my little friends."

The two women entered a lofty room, which had been once the work-room of a cheap photographer, and in which now there was a whole world on wings, the rarest and most charming birds in perfect liberty.

"Oh, the little creatures, how pretty they are," cried her sister, and almost immediately putting one hand on her dress; "only it is a pity that they make a mess on people, the dirty little things."

The work-room, in spite of its birds, was as tidy as an old maid's room, and had as its only

decoration three plaster bas-reliefs of the Parthenon, taking the place of an overmantel. A long plank placed at a certain height and loaded with books in white Italian vellum bindings, ran along the walls. In one corner was a half-open cupboard, in which jars could be seen of preserved food swimming in oil, and a salad-bowl full of eggs. There was only a straw couch in the room, but in a recess like an alcove, upon a plank supported by trestles, was stretched a little mattress covered by Turkish tapestry, where at night the old man slept fully dressed. The room smelt of birds.

"Ladies, in what way can I be of service to you?" asked the master of the place, as he offered the two ladies a seat upon the bed.

"Well, sir,"—it was La Faustin who opened the conversation—"there exists, M. Sainte-Beuve has told me, another *Phædra* besides Racine's, and at the same time he told me that you were the man who could best tell me about it, you being a Greek and so well acquainted with the language of ancient Greece. I do not know if I am asking too much, but I am curious to hear you read of this *Phædra* in the original. That will perhaps awaken ideas in me. I

should like to leave you, as a barbarian of ancient times who had passed two hours in the Greece of Pericles, with a little of the sound of the tongue in my ears."

The old man began to drag his couch after him to the plank of books, gathering round his long thin person a cotton dressing-gown, under which could be seen a knitted vest and long woollen stockings, climbed upon the couch, and pointing out a volume in the midst of the row, said in the tone of veneration of the custodian of an abbey's treasure pointing out his greatest relic, "Ladies, the divine Homer!" Then, taking another volume by the side of it, he descended piously wiping the dust off it with his elbow, and placing it upon a little table which he drew towards him, he opened it carefully at a page, the margins of which he smoothed for a moment with the palms of his old hands.

His enormous spectacles safely fixed upon his nose, after leaning a moment over the old book Athanassiadis raised his head in ecstasy, and with his eyes to the ceiling, said—

"Hippolytus. The scene is laid at Trezena, before the palace, at the entrance of which are two statues, one of Diana, the other of Venus."

He at once attacked the first two lines of the Greek tragedy.

"I am Venus, Goddess whose fame
Is wide spread on earth and in heaven."

"Excuse me, Monsieur Athanassiadis," La Faustin interrupted; "I have my carriage below, and if you would bring your book, I could take you to dine with my sister and myself. I would have my door closed to visitors, and we could have a good evening to ourselves."

"Oh, madam," replied the old man, "if I could, and if you desired it, it would give me great pleasure. But from the month of November to the end of May I am a prisoner in this room, and you can understand a little of the pleasure I feel in having these birds around me. All this time I am forbidden to go out, the air of your winter would kill me."

La Faustin then remarked that there was paper pasted over all the joints of the glass roof.

The old man resumed his reading, interspersing here and there the ancient Greek of the book with French phrases, such as these: "Your Racine, madam, has not translated that."

"Your Racine, madam, has translated that badly."

"You are bored, little Maria?" said La Faustin in a low voice to her sister.

"No; now and then I do not detest a Chinese puzzle, so I am finding your Athanassiadis amusing."

The day had ended. The old man lit a little lamp and continued his reading, but at each change of person in the dialogue his eye shifted towards the cuckoo clock fixed above the heads of the two women.

"Are we wearying you, Monsieur Athanassiadis?" said La Faustin, after noticing the old man.

"No, no, ladies; only I observe the customs of my country. I dine earlier than the fashionable world in Paris."

"Ah, to be sure; it is the time your dinner is brought you," said La Faustin, with the adorable tyranny of the woman who wishes to satisfy one of her caprices right up to the end. "Monsieur Athanassiadis, you must dine as if we were not here; we can resume afterwards."

"But, ladies, I do not have my dinner brought, I prepare it myself. The cuisine here is not very complicated. I am in some degree a follower of the School of Cornaro the Venetian, and eggs, dried fish and black olives are my principal diet. From where you are sitting you can see the larder of my winter quarters."

La Faustin got up and went to the cupboard; there, with a little girl's curiosity, she took out, one after the other, each of the jars, and, after childishly turning them round in the light, replaced them in the shadows.

"Oh, how much these little dried fish look like matches!"

"Yes, they are tziros. When cating them I drink raki."

"Do you never have meat, Monsieur Athanassiadis? How singular! Ah, here are some anchovies; they are good. And every day you eat plain eggs, that must become monotonous in the long run."

, While she was talking and looking, La Faustin fastened up her train, pinned up her skirt like a washer-up, and whene she had done so, in the tone of joyous command of a woman at a picnic, she said to her companion—

"And to-day we are going to do your cooking. I feel sure you don't know what an anchovy

omelette is, the omelette in the making of which I have no rival. Ah, well, you shall taste one made with my own white hands. Maria, pass me the pan I see there; and you, Monsieur Athanassiadis, some coal at once, if you please.".

"Oh, ladies, ladies, you overwhelm me with confusion!" gurgled Athanassiadis.

"Never mind, old Palicarus, my sister and myself were not born with a cook in our royal cradle," said Carsonac's mistress, in her easy, familiar manner.

"I break three eggs, Monsieur Athanassiadis. See how I cut up the anchovies, neither too large nor too small. I will entrust you with my secret, which is to grill them just a little on the fire, and then just a suspicion of cumin."

"Oh, ladies, ladies!" Athanassiadis continued to groan.

"Really, old Palicarus, you are hindering us in our operations," said her sister.

"Monsieur Athanassiadis, attention! You are going to see how I turn it. One, two, three; that's it! Hasn't it a lovely colour, and isn't it soft underneath? Now, little Maria, lay the table for the gentleman."

Amid the flying and chirping of the birds, which

were kept awake by the noise this evening, and the coming and going consequent upon the little banquet, the two sisters, with little theatrical politenesses, began to serve the old man, who, after defending himself half-heartedly, abandoned himself to the charm of the young women's caressing gaiety, which was bearing him in his old age an hour's company.

"Ah, well, Monsieur Athanassiadis, is it a success? Are you satisfied with your cook?" said La Faustin, her face animated with childish joy. "And now for the second course—the olives. Oh, but they are beautiful," she said, as she bit two or three. "Taste, little Maria."

"Thank you, I am more carnivorous than that."

"The gentleman has finished, so now for dessert."

In a minute La Faustin cleared the little table of everything with a whirlwind grace.

"Come," murmured old Athanassiadis, picking up his Euripides with a smile, "all I know of my old Greek I will try and impart to you, ladies."

"Your coachman, Juliette!"

"I had entirely forgotten him. Be kind

enough to go down and tell him to go and get his dinner at the nearest wine shop, and then come back."

When her sister returned she found La Faustin with her elbows upon her parted knees, and the tragedienne's beautiful, nervous head buried between the palms of her hands, drinking in the glories which escaped from the mouth of the old Greek. Sometimes getting up and signing to Athanassiadis to continue, she walked about repeating the verses that a few words of translation into French had made her understand, and then reseated herself.

Athanassiadis, having reached the posthumous accusation of Phædra against her sonin-law, began to explain to the two women, with an intelligence which surprised La Faustin, this figure of fatality, otherwise very grand, very, human, very natural in her lover's resentment as pictured by the poet of the Court of Louis XIV; and the commentator provided the modern tragedienne with a temptation to introduce new accents into the rôle she had now rejuvenated, renewed and historically understood. At eight o'clock the reading of the tragedy terminated. La Faustin got up after discreetly rolling up several gold pieces in a scrap of paper, and with the air and tone of a very great lady, said, "Greek professor, we have occupied many hours of your time. I beg you to accept this small remuneration for your lost time."

"No, madam," answered the old man. "First of all, you have prepared a dinner for me. Then I know you, I have often seen you play in the summer, in the months when I am permitted to go out; and the Greeks, modern as well as ancient, owe you a debt of gratitude for lending your talent to the resurrection of the grand figures in their history. No, dear madam."

The old man pronounced these words in a chanting voice which trembled with emotion, and in which the substitution of the "ze" for the "ch" introduced a childlike gentleness.

. "Ah, well, I am of your opinion, Monsieur Athanassiadis. I think this evening's pleasure ought not to be paid for with money. I should prefer to recall it to you in another way; I should like you to wish for samething which I alone can give you."

"Now, madam, as you wish to be so gracious to an old man, I will confess that there is a product of my country which I cannot procure here, and which I should be happy to taste once again before I die. It is the honey of Hymettus; perhaps, madam, you through the Embassy——"

"Why, the French Minister Plenipotentiary in Greece is one of my friends; there will be in the first packet from the Embassy a jar of honey from Hymettus, the best the bees of your country can make. Once more, Monsieur Athanassiadis, good-bye, and thank you."

"The good old man is really touching!" said La Faustin, as she sat near her sister in the carriage. She resumed: "In fact, the evening will not be wasted. It seems to me that some of the veils in the darkness of my rôle have been torn asunder." After a few minutes, La Faustin, her expression masked by the darkness, added, dropping her phrases one by one: "But to play this rôle, this rôle which the greatest actresses of, passion of the past have undertaken with fear and trembling, one must not be in the state of, coldness of soul in which I am, it is necessary to love madly and frantically, with heart, head and senses."

"Juliette, I offer you a subject; ah well, yes, a lover. What!"

La Faustin, without hearing her, resumed:

"Do you understand? To leave him, loving me as he loved me, for he loved me like a madman; to have left him with the promise that before two months he would abandon career, family and country to live for ever at my side; and yet I have had no news of him since the day on which we said 'au revoir.' To all my letters for years past there has been no reply."

"Do you still write to him, then?"

"Yes, yes, on the days when I am desperately sad."

"But, Juliette, surely the bottom of the letterbox has been broken by your sorrows!"

La Faustin ceased to answer her sister, and wrapped in silence, was borne along dark streets with her sorrowful face covered by the black lace of her hat.

"Come and have supper with me," said Carsonac's mistress just as the carriage stopped in front of the house.

" No."

"Then I am going to have supper with you."

"No, let Juliette be alone this evening—all alone."

IV

To create a *rôle* that is to give the external life of the soul, to give the life of the physiognomy and gestures to a printed person, a paper corpse, is indeed a difficult task.

.There is first of all a serious reading, which in the case of La Faustin had a curious side; for with her it appeared to be quite a mechanical operation, in which the sense of what she read did not seem to reach her brain.

Then the real study commenced, followed almost immediately by discouragement, by a sentiment of defiance common to all great talents, which makes them say, "No, I shall never be able to play this part—never!"

Listen to the confidences given to a friend of mine by one of our most daring actresses upon this first moment of mistrust—

"Every part to create seems to me a world to lift. I have exaggerated sensations of fright, so vivid that I hope for and expect an earthquake, a cataclysm, which will deliver me from my anguish. I curse the author, myself, the whole of nature, and become stupid till the precise moment when a simple light unravels the chaos."

La Faustin had, too, an ungrateful and rebellious memory against her, and the disturbing preoccupation of a possible failure, for the part of Phædra is one of seven hundred lines.

In spite of everything the $r\partial le$ took possession of her, carried her out of herself, and almost unconsciously the tragedienne entered into the work of composition, working principally and for preference in bed, where she could better concentrate her attention.

Then the operation conceived in a writer's imagination becomes slowly warmed into life. This pouring out from nought of an embryo of a person, its successive formation, its final release of a living creature, and at last its existence—the actress felt this operation take place in her person rather than in her mind. She ceased to be herself, experiencing the inmost secret enjoyment which the actor does in being another than himself. A new woman created by the labour of her brain entered her skin, drove her out and took her life.

Here I cannot resist the temptation of giving

another extract from the letter quoted above upon this partly double life—

"Starting from the day upon which the part is entrusted to me, we live together. I might almost say that it possesses and dwells in me. It certainly takes more than I give it. So it generally happens that I assume almost unconsciously, at home as well as elsewhere, the tone, physiognomy and the general appearance that I wish to give it. Impressed as I am in such a case, I do not know how to be of a cheerful disposition while struggling with a mournful or terrible personality which is imposed upon my mind, no more than my own ill-humour resists another personality, joking, laughing and shouting in my ear. That is how it seems to me. Have I made myself understood? In such a circumstance I am two. That is the whole secret of my work. I think and live the part. It is lived when I deliver it to the public."

Now, this is a curious thing: tragedians, both men and women, as well as comedians, and actors and actresses of modern drama, have not the help of contemporary models. The anger of Achilles and the love of Phædra are neither an anger nor a love which one meets with in our

streets or drawing-rooms. The imagination of these artists must extend to the sublime, which is at the extremity of the supernatural, and must attain, by an extraordinary intuition beyond human sentiment, that which they are commanded to render real. In whom is this found? In women without education, like La Faustin, absolutely ignorant of the periods they represent, and of the history of the heroines and great queens they incarnate; women who say to the friend who rehearses them, "Tell me a little about this Theseus," and who do not listen, being occupied by the effort to grasp their part. these are the women who reincarnate this humanity in such an illusive form, with accents, attitudes and gestures which the littérateurs, sculptors and painters most conversant with the ancients could not imagine. Ask them the reason how such a miracle can come to pass. They reply in one word, "Instinct! Instinct!" That is, in fact, the only explanation of this lucid somnambulism, this insight into the mighty past.

From the body of the tragedienne who at the actual hour is already inside her part a little, and is trying her skill at repeating the words, spon-

taneously rise in quite a natural way beautiful and ample gestures, the gestures of the ancient statuary, which gestures, no more than the movements of her features, does she study in a mirror—quite convinced as she is that the true comedienne, without needing to account for it, bears in herself the feeling of the accuracy of her performance.

The mirror, according to the expression of a great actress, now retired, is the resource of those without brains, of puppets who keep a list of all the artificial processes known to produce sentiment without actually experiencing it.

In the translation of the motions of the soul by pantomime, however, invention is little. Where taste and art show themselves is in the choice reduction and moderation of gesticulation, which must at all times be pacified, tranquilized, extinguished and reduced to the instruction of the old theatrical manuals, "Play with hands in pockets." Sobriety is the characteristic of perfect scenic creations, which have as their ideal to bring upon the stage a figure whose dramatic life, like that in the picture of a master, stands out, from the half-tone and harmony of the colours only in a few luminous places,

But, perhaps more than in mimicry, the great difficulty of a part lies in the agreement between the actor's voice and the author's sentiment, the attainment of the correct sonority, and the exact vocalization of the dramatic intention.

To that particular end, the efforts, researches and repetitions of a line or hemistich, which La Faustin spoke in every way, quickly, slowly, and passing it through the infinite modulations of a supple and cultivated voice, hundreds of times, were directed.

One afternoon at the races, where for company the tragedienne had taken little Luzy in her coupé, she was repeating: "He my joy, my honour, my glory!" a phrase from the Czarine by M. Scribe, which she was playing at a matinée in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, for an hour and a half, until she suddenly discovered the sound her ear desired.

V

"LISTEN; both father and son—the son quite a young man—had to spend the evening as usual with an old friend of the family. The son, having a cold, refused to leave the fireside."

The story was continually interrupted by the noise of a closing door, which gave entry to a messenger, who whispered a word in the story-teller's ear or presented to him a letter, which he signed on the corner of the mantelshelf just as he stood.

"I was telling you that the son remained by the fireside. On the staircase the father discovered that he had forgotten his handkerchief, so he returned and sent his son to his room for it. Sitting down in the young man's seat to warm himself for a minute, his mind, chanced to wander to the way his son would spend his solitary evening; perhaps, too, he was somewhat curious as to the little table where he was writing. He saw a price list from the official funeral company, and also a price list from a rival company, with wood engravings of

each class, then between the two an application for a first-class equipment selected from the two companies, and conciliating with wise economy the decorum due to the high financial position of the deceased. His father had no doubt that it concerned his own funeral, with which his farseeing son was occupying his time. The son returned with the handkerchief. What if he had been an ordinary father! But this father said nothing to his son, and went out with a smile to spend the evening, where he told the story cleverly, with many amusing details.

"There is an example of heroism in home life for you, of the true heroism without affectation, much of which even the Conciones of antiquity do not offer us," interjected the narrator of the story between the puffs of his cigar.

"He was a true business man," replied. Blancheron; "he had the solid and smiling scepticism which is our strength."

Then after a silence the banker added, pronouncing his words slowly: "And to think that a gentleman so admirably balanced died like a hare with a grain of lead behind the ear, upon the news of the marriage of a little girl he was keeping!"

After saying this Blancheron fell into a profound reverie. Blancheron, an outside broker one of the pluckiest speculators on the Bourse, had one of those energetic natures with strong traits, a stubborn mask and a workman's health, his whole personality bearing the hard and imperious impression of those not of the Jewish race who conquer money whether they are small or great. Into his bilious red complexion had begun to creep an olive tint, the metallic reflection of gold beneath the skin, so curious to observe by gaslight upon the faces of the smaller business people on the boulevards. Blancheron had a gambler's temperament, that is to say, an insolent confidence in the assistance of Providence, a happy predisposition of the mind to believe in the arrangement and success of events here belowand that was the time when everything in France succeeded.

Dressed in big clothes like a large English' farmer, the business man showed an almost brutal contempt for art and literature, which he extended to the members of those professions; and in all this existence given to the pursuit of wealth, and without outward ostentation, he

only allowed one distraction to penetrate and devour the 200,000 francs he made—a mistress.

Luzy formed the most perfect contrast to Blancheron. He was a smart, elegant little man, a courtier of the ladies, who rubbed shoulder with painters and men of letters, and dabbled with music; a young fellow to whom business came as if attracted by the charm he exercised; and he possessed in the midst of it all a fund of jest, and a yacht on the Mediterranean, in which he disappeared from the Stock Exchange for three months, when by a singular chance he had in two consecutive years avoided great disaster. Intelligent, skilful, artful, and one of the hangers-on of the green-room, Luzy had not the great ability of Blancheron nor his powerful imperturbability under knockdown blows, but modestly contented himself with gravitating in the sphere of his friend's operations.

From his reverie as he walked with the stride of a sailor on deck from one end of the room to the other, his short meerschaum pipe in his mouth, Blancheron aroused himself with these words—

"Ah, well, truly in God's name I feel as

strong as the old father. I am the man to deal with the machinations of human sentimentality, physical suffering and the crash of liquidation; you know it. Tell me, then, why this flesh, which you saw in the days of June cut and slashed as if it did not belong to me, has suffered more from a word or gesture of this woman than from the surgeon's knife. Yes, my dear fellow, this gross nature, for it can hardly be said of me that I am nervous," he cried, with a burst of proud laughter. "Yes, I suffer from the way in which Juliette gently opens the door when she returns. The turn of her key, her step when I hear it approach, though it seems the same as others, is for me full of grievous thoughts. Ah, this Phædra has made her put aside a heap of pure, loverlike, poetic ideas, and also my prosaic individuality."

Here and there among the phrases of his rough lamentation Blancheron called through the open door orders for the day's struggle for gold.

"How goes it? The premium of two sous for to-morrow? Have we the 60,000 for Templier? You say they are at 70.75. Buy me 90,000, and be smart about it!"

Then turning to Luzy again: "No, you can't know, my dear fellow, the strange ideas a beast of a part puts into an actress's head; she has never had a very passionate love for me, to be sure, and she did not conceal the fact from me, but in reality she belonged to fee, she was mine, and that through habit, through years of a joint existence, through the domination which a woman is always proud to exercise over a man and over a beast of a disposition like mine. Women in whom a dead love reawakens are the devil; every day I feel her draw further away from me, recollect herself, like one who is being dragged from my arms. If it were more money that she desired, it could be made for her, but against this phantom which has suddenly arisen in her heart, against this William Rayne, of whose existence she is not even certain, what can I do?"

"Come, my dear fellow, it is only a matter of a month; after *Phædra* has been performed the tragedienne will return to her ordinary place, and you will recover the Juliette of before. Till then she is still your mistress, is she not?"

"Actually she is," said Blancheron seriously,

"but her love for me, you see, is that of an honest woman who does not love her husband, and it seems stupid to say so, but that no longer suffices for me."

VΙ

In the theatre, which was shrouded in immense cloth covers, it was very dark—a darkness in which there was nothing luminous but the little squares of fire produced by the daylight passing through the red curtains of the windows of the boxes on the third tier, and the scintillations of the sapphire of the lustre like a sheaf of stalactites hanging in the chilly darkness from the vault of a glacier.

That, and also a little pallid light upon the caryatids of the proscenium, upon the indistinct mythological subjects on the ceiling, and upon the end of a double bass emerging beyond the rail from the blackness of the orchestra, are all that is to be seen in the empty house,

where, upon the edge of the balcony on the first tier, a white cat was walking in solitary state.

Upon the stage, lit up by two Argand lamps in the wings, it is almost as dark as the body of the house; within the breaks and gaps of the scenery wan lights showed like those to be seen by moonlight among the woodwork of a church steeple under construction.

Within, men in great-coats and round hats, who looked like needy quill-drivers, and women in shabby clothes, with their hands in old muffs, specimens of the common horde, were moving in a sort of fantastic obscurity.

From time to time the void and stillness of the vast house, upon whose roof a fierce sun was beating, vibrated with the heavy rolling of carriages, the noise of which seemed to pass and weigh one down, as do the stone carts above the catacombs.

The Théâtre Français, according to a custom which obtained only for pieces of the old répertoire of dramatic celebrities, had granted the great tragedian of the Odéon its house for a dozen rehearsals, and to-day was the first rehearsal of *Phædra*.

The foot-warmers traditional of the house of Molière had been charged and placed at the feet of the actresses seated in the Louis XV easy-chairs—properties of the piece to be played in the evening.

The prompter had taken his place on the left of the theatre at a little table upon which a lamp was placed; the old manager, Davesne, was by his side, turning his back to a large baton with a red velvet handle, hanging on a nail between two of the side scenes.

The conductor was on the right upon a couch. At the back of the stage is hung, half drawn up, a scene representing the immense chimney-piece of carved wood belonging to a drama of the Middle Ages; and the Hippolytus of Racine, with a bad cold and muffled up to the end of his nose in a comforter, occupied the stage.

"Now for a beginning. Are we all here?" said the voice of the stage-manager.

At this moment Theramenes, delayed by rheumatism, came hobbling in leaning upon a stick and reading aloud a doctor's certificate which he held in his hand.

"Come, surely we are all here now," the manager resumed.

"No," some one said; "Œnone is missing."

"It is too bad; and it is always the same at rehearsal. Let us begin all the same, that may make her come, particularly as she is half-anhour late."

Then they began in the gray light of the stage, filled with something like a morning mist, the only white to be seen being the actors' collars and the actresses's hands as they stand with their faces in shadow.

They reach the second scene.

"M. Davesne!"—the voice of the stagemanager; while the prompter reads aloud—

"Alas, Lord, what trouble can match mine? The Queen lies at the point of death, In vain I watch her day and night."

Old Davesne, with a white beard, wearing a green vest, yellow trousers, and list shoes over his boots, with a bashful look and gestures reserved and cold which suit him well, proceeds with the speech of the friend to Hippolytus.

"Here she is, here she is," some one in the wings shouted.

"What a horrible cab! Ah, children, never engage an old driver!" said Œnone, a woman

of the deceitful theatrical type, undoing the strings of her hat, and she immediately gives La Faustin the replies in Scene III.

The birth of a rôle in the best-endowed artists and the most illustrious actors is a very curious thing. To appreciate it one must see the unintelligent and childish way in which they commence to speak the part, the silly, monotonous intonation and gestures, and the very slow infiltration by which the author's creation penetrates, fills and at last overflows into these feverish beings, but only at the end in an outburst of genius. Mlle. Mars used to say, "I have not yet sufficiently spouted this part!" That was a confession that all that was necessary for the conscientious artist was time, work and groping to reach perfection, and the ideal of a part. This pursuit of the best, this perpetual strife of the brain, this moral uneasiness up to the day of the first performance, gives women a state of the nerves not yet described, which among them is shown by fear, in their relations with theatrical people, and by the affectation of excessive humility, which always seems ready to rebel in a movement of anger and pride. Thus it was that La Faustin replied to a remark of the

stage-manager in a condescending way which astonished him-

"Oh, if that is your idea, then I must have made a mistake!"

But the obsequious expression was uttered in such a disagreeable voice as to give one the impression that it came from a woman who was about to scratch his face. There is one more peculiarity to note in actresses in this period of the incubation of a part, and particularly in the alluring and contradictory work of the rehearsals—they appear to be without sex, cold and austere. They seem to have resigned the amiable graces of their nature which they bring into the matters of life; they have no longer even a smile, and they appear as serious as men engaged in business.

"It doesn't go at all to-day," said the stagemanager quickly, rubbing his hips with his hand; "for the love of God, ladies and gentlemen, put a little more life into it!"

It was one of those days to be met with in Paris, when without knowing why the activity and elasticity of the Parisian appears to be asleep, one of those days when intelligence in business is without animation, when the strong, mad, exciting air of the capital seems heavily charged with puffs of idleness.

The rehearsal did not progress. La Faustin, in the midst of what she was saying, harshly smacked her lips; Hippolytus complained that he had something wrong with his voice, and announced that he would not be able to play in the evening; and Theramenes punctuated his hemistiches with sorrowful groans, and the prompter went to sleep. Among the other interruptions to Racine's text was for a long while that of the lampman, who was polishing the glasses of the lustre which had been let down, and as he turned them in his hands he made a noise like the pretty little jingling of a necklace of stones upon the neck of a lady waltzing.

Even the white cat, tired with its walk upon the edge of the balcony, had gone to nestle into the half-open vest of a machine man, who was doubled up asleep upon a wooden cross, with his chin on his chest.

"Come, it's all very bad to-day," said the stagemanager, getting up impatiently. "Everybody is very tired; there is only one thing to be done, put it off till another day." The rehearsal was abandoned, and La Faustin, still having the light of the Argand lamps in her eyes, stumbled into the Place du Palais Royal, hesitated for a moment to ask herself, as one does coming out of a dark place, if it was real daylight or merely a dream.

VII

"Is my sister up?" said Carsonac's mistress one morning to her sister's maid-of-all-work.

"No, not yet; madam is reading her papers. It appears that madam has never before had such good press notices. They refer to yesterday's benefit performance, you know."

"Ah, Guenegaud, my sister is fortunate to have in her service a girl like you; I had to give my girl notice. The girl, who is about to become a mother, received ten francs from the furniture people to let them know every time there was any money in the house; and

you can't imagine what the little wretch told me when I gave her notice. Have you got over your illness, Guenegaud?"

"I am very well," said Guenegaud in a distant tone, on her guard against the amiability of her mistress's sater.

Guenegaud, a woman of fifty, broad-shouldered like a man, who always wore pince-nez and looked like a robust country attorney in a linen cap, in spite of her lawyer-like appearance, sketched by Daumier, was attached to her mistress's interests by one of those forms of religion which certain rustic natures experience for a master who appears to them like a demi-god.

"Then I can go in, can I not?"

Guenegaud bowed and opened the door. La Faustin was in bed, covered by unfolded theatrical papers, still smelling of the printer's ink, heaped up in one place, sliding in another the length of the fine Holland linen, and after stopping two or three times for a second, falling one after another on to the floor with a sound like dry leaves. The tragedienne, her head lifted up by two pillows, her brown hair undone and spread around her face, rested smiling, with the

glow of happiness upon her face, and her knees raised like a reading-desk; and, in the exertion she had just made by cutting with the back of an impatient hand a laudatory paper, the tab of one of the shoulders of her chemise had broken, and allowed her naked shoulder and the end of her breast to be seen.

"You, at this time in the morning . . . whatever has brought you?"

"I'am going to tell you; and are you pleased with your journalists?"

"Every one more flattering than the last. It is a good omen for my first appearance in *Phædra*, and I am proud of it; but tell me your errand."

"The day after to-morrow we are giving a big dinner, a business dinner, you understand; first of all, there is to be played an adaptation of Carsonac's last piece for Vienna. Oh, you know his piece; it is new and has some heart in it. We shall have a success there; then there is some not bad diplomatic politeness and a heap of business matters. There is something I have to ask you, some little service. You are aware of the importance he attaches to your presence; really, he does not love you; but

whom does he love? Do you think it is me? Oh, that is news, thank you! I hope the provinces behave in a distinguished manner on your account."

The sister began to examine a gold crown, a laurel crown bearing upon each of its leaves the name of a part with this inscription—

THÉÂTRE FRANÇAIS DE ROUEN. TO JULIETTE FAUSTIN, FROM HER ADMIRERS.

"Yes, that came the other day as a surprise, because of that series of performances I gave this summer during my absence; but truly, little Maria, do you badly want me to go to the dinner, for your world, you see, disgusts me a little?"

"It does me too; but afterwards we will invite you whoever you please. There is no need for me to tell you that the invitation is for Blancheron as well."

"Oh, he will not come! He pretends that yours is the house in Paris where one always has indigestion after dining."

"Come, is it as bad as that, Juliette?"

"You know he is a man who has his own

ideas on food, you would never get him to come again. But I did not think of it before. I am engaged to dine with one of his friends to-day; you know the man, you saw him at Sainte Adresse with him—little Luzy; it is a theatre party. Bah, I will let them go alone, and I will come back as soon as they are gone. Is your Carsonac still so thoroughly bad?"

"What can you expect? This man with his incipient affection of the nerves, with the raw beefsteak he always has upon his back,—yes, a Russian treatment,—not a moment's sleep, the poor dear passes the night walking his room like a tiger-cat, smoking cigars and drinking; that does not predispose towards Christian charity. After all we do pretty well, I promise you, and I should not do so if suddenly he were to become an imbecile; and do you know he is threatened with that? You promise for the evening, do you not? You are good as ever this morning!"

In sport Maria in a murmur said, "You have a skin as soft as a step on the staircase of the Mont-de-Piété," as her lips traversed the shoulder of La Faustin, who cut short her

sister's tenderness with these words: "Leave off, you know very well I don't care for these games!"

VIII

AT ten o'clock when La Faustin got to Carsonac's the dinner was not over. While she was taking off her opera-cloak she heard the sound of voices, and when she entered the dining-room, her sister, her face lit up with anger, was standing upright, leaning her hands upon the table and shouting across the twenty-five guests at her lover, "Old flirt!"

Then the woman beat the air with her arms, and nervous tremors ran undulating along her limbs.

The body of friends, Moumoute at their head, taking the woman under the armpits, dragged her into the dressing-room, where for some time the abusive term "swine" alternated with stifled.

screams, which were succeeded by tears—a deluge of tears.

"Lillette, what has happened then?" said La Faustin, as the girl passed in front of her to rejoin her friends.

"The same old thing; at the first course Bonne-Ame was horribly gay, at the second, she eyed all the men in a hysterical way, at the side dishes she had a dispute with Carsonac, and at dessert came the tears and sobs; that is the progress of events!"

Carsonac, silent, cold and pallid, devoured his shame and rage with his nose in his plate, then, getting up, passed into his study followed by his intimate friends, the *élite* of the masculine society of the neighbourhood.

In the large drawing-room, completely empty and half lit, was a woman with two little girls, almost children, brought there by the oddness of the relations of Paris; the woman had taken them there from the dining-room to protect them from the vulgar talk. This woman, a strange creature, but perfectly honourable, standing upright upon the large circular divan in the middle of the room, was amusing her little companions by falling flat at full length,

with a cry of agony, like one from the fifth act.

A few of the men remained quietly at table and talked, moistening the conversation with alcohol.

The croupier from the tables at Monaco was talking to the leader of the orchestra, the husband of Moumoute, of the difficulty of rearing starlings. The doctor from Homburg, mute as a diplomatist, poured himself out a small glass every ten minutes, at the same time pouring out another for his neighbour, an actor, a maniac for perfume, who drank his drink with his nose in his coat collar, where he had stitched some vanilla husks. A big insipid fellow, whose position in the world was due to having good collaborators, was enumerating the domestic virtues. of the wives of his collaborators to a musical composer with a huge tuft of hair. The Viennese adapter was making jokes to the mother of a dancer. A Scandinavian who thought he had written a piece in French, and had all his things made to take to pieces, his cane, his opera-glasses and his cigar-case, was engaged in showing the double back of his

watch, containing some amusing miniatures, to the manager of a theatre, who was for the time in a bad way, and was trying to find out the real price the unactable author was willing to pay for his glory. On the other side of the foreigner, listening to the conversation, was the man who lit the theatre, and who was the manager's largest creditor; he had a bailiff to seize the takings every evening, and only allowed the poor devil the opportunity of seeing the authors on a Sunday.

The man who sent asparagus from Aranjuez, with the verve and humour of a traveller was telling at the table this story of the country of his adoption.

"One morning, at Toledo, I had gone to take my twelve piastres, the small monthly rent I paid. My landlady, I must tell you, was an old grandee of Spain, of a fallen house. She had two daughters; the eldest, her eyebrows black as coal, was a member of the order of Saint-Jacques, a cloistered order, suppressed by the Spanish revolution, but the costume of which she still continued to wear, it consisting of a cowl, a long white robe, and a cross as tall as herself. The other girl was younger,

was married, and was the mother of a little boy of between five and six, the heir to the *title, the last marguis of the family, and, by the three ladies, the most spoilt child in creation. This little man had the caprices and the ways of a tyrant. There are no little ones here, are there?" said the narrator, glancing round the dining-room. "That day he had made up his mind to see what no woman, particularly a nun, will show. His mother threatened to whip him. Then the rascal, overcome with rage, shook with nervous tremor and began to cry as if he were being flaved alive. His mother put her hand over his mouth; the rascal bit her, and suddenly rolled upon the ground in convulsions. A door opened and the grandmother appeared with an austere face, looked at the child foaming at the mouth for a minute, and said, 'The last marquis of the family is dying; will you let him die, my daughter?' The nun of the order of Saint-Jacques was engaged in reading a book of prayers, looking like a statue, as if the child's cries did not reach her ears. Ah, gentlemen, who can say what there was in the nun's regard for her mother's summons! The nun took the child by the

hand and went out with him. A second afterwards, the last marquis, passing between our legs, fled down the staircase as scared as if he had seen the devil."

In Carsonac's study the serious men, the dramatic authors, smoked, crowded together in groups, like people surrounded by stealers of ideas. Only from time to time the liveliest of them got up, went in turn to each of them, rubbed his head for a moment like an old Punch, then quite contented went back to his place. Right at the back of the dark room two men talked in a low voice, one of whom was entirely lost in the smoke of his cigar, and seemed to be a voice without a body as he repeated to the other in a tone of sorrowful conviction, "It is not bad, it would have to be cut."

At the moment Carsonac discreetly took up his hat and got ready to go out he was joined between two portières by the manager of the theatre.

"There is nothing to be done with the Scandinavian, he is only willing to find 20,000 francs."

"Fool, take his manuscript and his 20,000 francs, that will do for the costumes and the

scenery. I will write a piece upon the same period, and after his play you can put on mine."

Carsonac had his hand upon the door-knob of the ante-chamber, when he was stopped by the exporter of asparagus from Aranjuez.

"Carsonac, I have an interest in an elephant which has been landed at Carthagena."

"Well, how does that concern me?"

"Perhaps you could utilize it in your next piece?"

"I don't know I am sure," replied Carsonac, whose eye had flamed, but it soon died away.

"Don't be unkind; you would like to burn my elephant, but you know I am not to be fooled, and you will only have it if I have an interest in the piece."

"Ah, well, that's all right, agreed; hurry it up as much as possible."

La Faustin, after staying some minutes in the dressing-room, returned to the drawing-room with the lady and the two young girls. One had a velvety look beneath her heavy Turkish lashes, and in a white dress, from which the red of a coral collar stood out, had that candour and ingenuousness, that loving expansion towards

every one, which very retiring girls going only occasionally into society seem to possess. She told of her first convent passion, her love for a lizard. It had a soft and friendly eye like a man's. It was always about her, and when she played the piano it passed its head through the opening of her corsage to be near the music. A jealous companion crushed it, and it dragged itself to die upon its friend. She hollowed out a little tomb for it, upon which she placed a little cross. She would no longer go to Mass. She no longer took pleasure in prayer. Her religion had ended. God was too unjust.

Bonne-Ame, recovered from her hysterics, had ventured out of the half-open dressing-room door, and her face, white with rice powder, was greeting the persons who were still there. Then she wandered through the various rooms, with wild eyes which seemed to laugh and a serious mouth. She went in a whimsical way, put her delicate profile beneath the men's noses—her small, regular nose, her well-shaped mouth, and the roguish wrinkles of her forehead which gave a charm to her pale face.

As a creature of caprice in whom the pulse of folly seemed to beat, a stirring nature, diverted,

not comprehensible, she had arrived at that unhealthy and delirious time in the life of women of love-the day of the discovery of her first wrinkle. Bonne-Ame, who, through a vague recollection of her frenzy, wished and sought to destroy the thought in her head, continued to " walk from one to the other with her mask of enchantment and her smile full of a hidden darkness. In the irony of her smile there was something like the moist trembling of a tear, and in the tenderness which she let fall upon the former, the strident "brrr!" which came in its suit, made this tenderness into a fraud, and again the cynical expression she uttered was sometimes uttered with a nervous break in a voice like that of a little girl who has been whipped. Undulating, bending and touching in her work as the exciter of men, in a supple embrace immediately released, counting the beating of her heart, for a moment resting upon the breast of a guest whom she touched lightly: or else, falling back and lost in the shadow of a great couch, she delivered up to kisses her rosy foot through the spaces of her white silk stockings.

Suddenly, in the midst of the adoring circle

which had formed around her, Bonne-Ame gave vent to a special burst of laughter, by which she announced as if with an orchestral accompaniment the execution of a lover, an execution with which she loved to associate the public.

"In fact, do you know what I call you now, Gargouillard?"

Gargouillard, who had already been baptized thus by his mistress, was the last official lover of Bonne-Ame, of three weeks' standing.

"I call him the 'Commander of the Faithful.' His nickname suits his foolish innocence well, does it not?"

She burst into a laugh which shook the whole of her body, and immediately resumed: "But has any one seen him since he broke one of his front teeth? It is not a mouth any longer; it is a gap." And with a beautiful laugh—

"My lover writes well; he is a stylist!"

' Bonne-Ame took out of her pocket two or three letters from Gargouillard, which she kissed one after the other, making amusing grimaces the while.

"I am going to let you know his inner thoughts. You know Gargouillard is a punctual

man. He writes, 'You must be mine at a quarter to eight.' No, decidedly his letters are stupid; one would think he wrote with his nose! How stupid he looks when he gazes at me loverlike, but with all that he does not procure me any emotion. It is a pity that it is not the summer; to make him ridiculous I would make him carry cockchafers in a box. To be sure I have no taste for used-up men, and no means of showing him the door. Have I not told him that Carsonac was jealous!" Bonne-Ame laughed, laughed, laughed. "That miscarried, for I forgot to tell Carsonac and he invited him to dinner. At any rate he shall have his month's notice like a servant."

In the master's study the dramatic authors continued to smoke in silence like Orientals.

"But to be sure, what has become of Carsonac?" one of them ventured to remark.

"Carsonac has gone to find out this evening's receipts. If he did not have that little digestive walk. . . . Ah, well, 4,500," said the speaker to Carsonac, who re-entered at the same moment.

"It is the evening before the term, the receipts are always lower then," replied Carsonac thought-

fully. "But is not my sister-in-law with you? Where is she?"

"She is in the great drawing-room; she has spent the evening with the girls."

Carsonac went to La Faustin, and taking her into the study, said to her, "Bonne-Ame has not presented you to the little man of Blainville this evening. The deceiver, she no longer works for the house! In two words, we don't want Marescot, she has no hold upon the public; but she is backed by Marville and the others, as well as the whole of the State Ministry, whom she has inflamed, and who wish to force us to withdraw the part from Blanche Tonnerieux.

"But you know all about the numerous tiresome things which have happened. I have invited the little man from Blainville, one of your lovers. I would have let loose Bonne-Ame at him, but he cannot even look at her picture; the little man has the Excellency's ear, between ourselves, some even say that he is one of his bastards. Do me the service of showing him that he must be our countermine; warm him up, and do not fear to inflame him a little, that costs nothing, will give him pleasure, and be of use to us."

After presenting the young man to La Faustin, he made them sit at the end of the couch in the study, and listened to their conversation without appearing to do so.

Some minutes afterwards, in Carsonac's study, the last cigar went out at the lips of the last smoker. Then the men there gave signs of life, moved a little, and vague monosyllables escaped their lips. One of them even got up, and to revive his legs walked round the room singing.

"You do step high," said one of the dramatic authors.

First Dramatic Author: "What is that?"

Second Dramatic Author: "It is the walk of people who are beginning to be attacked by spinal softening. Oh, you have only reached the second period, the locomotor ataxia, the lack of co-ordination of the muscular force."

Third Dramatic Author: "Stop, my boot-maker—who, in parenthesis, looks like an undertaker—the last time I paid his bill remarked, with a cunning smile, that I now wore my boots out completely at the toe. Would that be a symptom?"

Fourth Dramatic Author: "Shall I have to study my shoes?"

Fifth Dramatic Author: "Do you others sometimes experience the feeling that when you are walking on the pavement, you are walking upon a soft carpet?"

Sixth Dramatic Author: "No, I do not; but it is very funny, though not as funny as that, that there are days when the nerves, which cause us to walk, appear to me to be like the strings of marionettes, which stretch with moisture, and something takes place at the nape of the neck that I cannot define; then in bed I do not always know where my legs are. Oh, if it were to be the beginning of the end; eh, Carsonae?"

"That is perfectly indifferent to me, it would be my own death that would annoy me," replied Carsonac, with negro-like mischievousness, as he passed his hands down his legs and seemed to feel the phenomena described by his friends.

Each one, asking, feeling themselves, told the others in a boasting way, beneath which traces of fear could be discovered, just as a man sings at night to quiet his fears, and recounted the symptoms observed in himself of the malady which forms the terror, the fixed thought, and the after-dinner conversation of the world of the nervous with sensual leanings. Little by little

the conversation, leaving vague phraseology, arrived at definite terms; frightful words were used which sounded to the ear like a death-knell, and gave to the little party the joy of a clinical conference over a subject stretched upon a slab.

"Thank you, I am going," said La Faustin, who had coldly enough accomplished her mission; "you gentlemen are much too mournful for me!"

In the dining-room La Faustin found her sister coquettishly arranging upon her head a Spanish hair-net, and said to her, "Rosaline really wants to see you, she wants to consult you about a change in her entrance in the fifth act. You would not like to refuse her that come, put on this hat."

The two women went out together.

IX

In this house, designed like the house at box 23 of Count Hoffman, the two women went down a flight of stairs. A turn of the key introduced them into a corridor inside the theatre, where gentlemen said sweet things to the heads of women enveloped up to the neck in the curtains of their dressing-rooms, while they were being dressed from behind.

Rosaline was still on the stage. In the dressing-room there was only the little boy of Carsonac's mistress.

Taking advantage of the absence of the actress and the dresser, the child, seated at the toilet-table and surrounded by the white sponge, the hare's-foot, the red pot, and eyelid pencils, was conscientiously engaged in making an old man's head, while drinking, between each bit of painting, a mouthful from a glass, into which he had poured the half of a phial of currant syrup.

"What, here at this hour, you terrible child!" said the mother, pushing him back in his chair

and wiping his face roughly with her handkerchief. "Victor," she cried to a servant, "take this little boy and give him to Zelie for me, and tell her to put him to bed without any argument. Stop," said Bonne-Ame, looking at her watch, "the tableau lasts longer than usual. In fact, I have a word or two to say, so I will leave you for a minute and bring back Rosaline to you."

La Faustin, a little sickly that day, dropped down on the poor walnut couch, and in the torrid heat of the little room, the stupefying atmosphere of a Moorish bath, and the drowsy congestion which these airless corners, inflamed with gas from the depths of the theatre produce, she heard, as if in the distance, scraps of the conversation of a long skinny creature at the door of the dressing-room.

"Yes, from eight to five work in the work-room for the costumes, and then from six to one in the morning to do my duty as a dresser, and for all that forty francs a month, and three months the manager has not paid me, and I have only had coffee to-day, and yet they expect me to have the heart to put these truffled supper-eaters into yelvet and lace."

At the time that La Faustin was listening in a vague sort of way to the dresser's conversation, her sleepy eyes saw the indistinct furniture of the dressing-room become hidden in the contours and colours of a dream: the white earthenware pan, which had lost its spout in a day of suffering, the white-wood toilet-table painted black, a real bailiff's writing-table, the large mirror flanked by two blinding gas-jets, and from which stood out a large pasteboard with the fortune-teller's name, Claudius, in the midst of four heads of chubby cupids, whose breaths, engraved after the fashion of the cardinal winds of the ancient maps, bore, "Happiness, Health, Success, Fortune."

By the half-open door the passers along the corridor carrying messages to somewhere a good way off, whence a loud murmur escaped like shouting in the distance, only seemed to the woman like an automatic agitation, the movement of a mad-house, where incomprehensible things took place in a reasonable way.

La Faustin decided to shake off the invasion of this lethargy, with the nightmare of words and visions mixed with it. The woman made an effort, and mournfully shaking off her physical lethargy, she swept with her hand the canopy, and gathered up a bit of printed paper which she began to read.

The paper was in the language she had learned in Scotland in the midst of kisses which sealed her lips when she pronounced inaccurately.

Suddenly La Faustin got up as if awakened with a start, made a rapid inspection of the dressing-room, fumbled in all the corners, then with a nervous force which one would never have expected in such a delicate frame, began to turn upside down and displace all the furniture. The canopy was fastened to the wall. She at once took some matches, and lying at full length upon the floor, by the light of a match, shielded by one hand, removed the dirt and cobwebs with the other.

"Are you mad? What are you doing?" said her sister, surprising her when she returned, followed by Rosaline and the dresser.

La Faustin sprang up at a bound and said to Rosaline, "Where did you get this paper?"

"That paper; I don't know! Oh yes, now I know, it is an English paper which wrapped up a little silk network vest, a cobweb vest which was sent from London the other day."

"But the name of the paper, tell me it, the

date at least, if it could be discovered; is it yesterday's, or is it years old? Ah, what things we learn, we find out without knowing when they took place; and this piece missing from the bottom there." Speaking to the dresser she said, "I will give you two sovereigns if you find this little bit for me; you understand?"

"Two pounds!" said the woman, with a start of surprise. "To think that I lit the stove with it!"

"But what is there in this paper?" said La Faustin's sister.

"Nothing, nothing at all, another time I will tell you; but I may have this bit of paper, Rosaline, may I not?"

Without waiting for a reply, La Faustin went out of the theatre and rushed to the staircase. There, finding she was alone under the lamp on the first floor, at the risk of falling through, leaning the whole of her body over the handrail, she studied the torn bottom of the paper, which, after the name of William, contained a family name, cut off at the third letter, which resembled that of her old lover.

Reaching the bottom of the staircase, she began to walk along the dark street, beckoning to her coachman to follow her, walking with the haggard, halting gait of a woman who, in the dead of night, goes to throw herself into the Seine, and causing the few passers-by to turn back and gaze after her for a moment. Under each gas-jet she stretched toward the light her enigmatical bit of paper, each time thinking to drag its secret from it.

"I am really mad this evening, what I want to know I can easily find out." She called out aloud; and getting into ber terriage she was carried away at a fast trot.

As soon as she returned home La Faustin sat down to her desk, wrote a letter, undressed without assistance, and afterwards, instead of going to bed, began to walk about her room for a long time without being conscious of what she was doing.

That night La Faustin dreamt of the article she had read: a tiger-hunt given by the Viceroy of India, in which there was some one wounded, who sometimes had the face of William Rayne, and sometimes of an unknown man.

The next morning, after lighting her mistress's fire, Guenegaud leant upon the mantelpiece and

spelt out between her teeth, "The First Secretary to the English Embassy," and added aloud, "Is this letter to be sent, madam?"

La Faustin rose to a sitting position, holding her naked elbows in her hands, remained for a moment without reply, then said to Guenegaud, "Throw the letter and the bit of newspaper by the side of it on the fire."

Falling back upon her pillow, as if speaking to the wall: "No, I do not desire to be certain, I am afraid; I prefer to continue to live in ignorance to still be able to hope."

But from that day, though not willing to know, La Faustin's imagination could only picture William surrounded by the romance of one of Méry's heroes, with his white English flesh torn by the beasts' claws.

X

In the study of the *rôle* of Phædra, in the possession of her brain by the tragedy, in the effort of her intelligence to pour out from her breast the passion of the great hysterical legendary, the flame burning the wife of Theseus—a commoner phenomenon than one would think at the theatre—had caught fire in the body of La Faustin.

At the present time she wondered at the full sensations which produced things tickling the senses, the penetrating pleasure which gave her the smell of a flower inhaled with a deep breath in the hollow of her hand, her eyes half shut, eyelids drooping, in the car something like the roaring which sea-shells keep within them. La Faustin remained for an infinite time buried in ardent and agitating dreams, bubblings of the brain which are not of thought, while her abandoned body and love-flesh were traversed by little sensual shocks. A furious need of love which had first made her turn to the memory of William Rayne, remained in her unchained,

without an object, but ready to fall upon any one. In the midst of the calm and uneventfulness of her connection with Blancheron, at the image of certain married women who had long remained discreet, the tragedienne felt herself bitten by a sudden and irresistible desire for adultery with an unknown furnished by occasion.

At the moment of playing, La Faustin found herself at last in the state of a woman who, after a voluptuous read lying upon a park seat by the side of the high-road in the warm breath of a storm-wind, in the midst of cooing pigeons and flagging plants, calls softly a bold passer-by to satisfy her desires.

XI

THIS kind of physical inflammation was in some way encouraged by the complaisance of

her reverie, the return of her reflection and the complicity of her brain. The idea took possession of the artist, that if chance did not allow her soul to be moved by a passion, a fugitive caprice, a tempestuous passage, by a sudden revolution in the monotony of her existence as a lover, she would not find the ardour, tenderness and flame, the dramatic means which Racine's fiery rôle demanded. She even got far enough to ask herself if her calm, tranquil, satisfied life, her life, so to speak, of a married woman, had not brought a drowsiness to her faculties, a nervous stop to her acting, a temper to the daring of her attempts, and if in her last creations she had shown the power, the masterly qualities and the originality that one had a right to expect of her. She took herself back to her early years on the stage, to the years of misery and changing love, of a life lashed, overridden, crossed by dramas of the heart, and always in the fierce emotion of passion; and she discovered in these miserable and feverish years her most brilliant successes, her most notable triumphs, the creations she remembered with the most pride. At the same time that she was entreated by these thoughts without desiring it.

there came to her mind all sorts of cynical theories expounded by her sister upon the woman of talent, and upon the sort of masculinity of the artist-woman of song and speech—of the artist in the development of the vocal organs, and upon the bad side of the other sex given by nature to this woman, and upon a need of debauchery comprising in some way a part of her genius.

There were moments when she had, without motive or reason, sudden mad, romantic desires to abandon that smooth, quiet existence, to break suddenly with Blancheron, to sell or destroy her house. After all these ordinary ties had broken at a single blow, and all this happiness gone to wreck and ruin, in a little room of her youth that she had seen to let a few days before she could see herself there beginning over again her young, free and fantastic loves of former days, and bringing back to the theatre the result of the joys and grief of that feverish life.

XII

In the dawning light of the scene appeared at the back of the theatre a palace of Trezena, of the Doric architecture of a scene-painter; from the wings came men and women, clad in tunics, in chlamydes, in the pallium with its ample folds and cascades of stuff, whose song, with heroic gestures, was of the dead generation. One would have said that a phantom Greece was taking possession of the stage in a penumbra of daylight, and speaking in the glories of a lyric language, somewhat astonishing to nineteenthcentury ears. There was Phædra, the wife of Theseus, the daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë, in her starry tunic, with her band of gold upon her forehead, and there was Theseus, and there was Hippolytus, the son of Theseus and Antiope, queen of the Amazons, clad in her animal's skin, as shown in Guérin's picture, and there was Aricie, princess of the royal blood of Athens, there was the old Theramene, the teror of Hippolytus, in a dark cloak, and there was Œnone, nurse and trusted attendant

of Phædra, and there were also Ismene and Panope.

In the poverty of the lighting, the mournful emptiness of the house, where in the darkness there was scarcely more than thirty people, the Alexandrians came on in the midst of a pathetic pantomime, with the waving of floating robes and through the noble march of the catastrophe; all that very much resembling the antiquity resuscitated in the picture of a Roman prize now seen in a hollow shaken by the rolling of the traffic. The little notice in the corridor of the green-room called it "the dress rehearsal, the last rehearsal of *Phædra*."

After the fifth act had been entirely gone through, the actors and actresses scattered through the theatre, skipping, happy, gossiping and gesticulating.

La Faustin had gone into the green-room, and there in broad daylight the Greek Queen was engaged in making a scene, half laughing, half angry with an old painter of great talent and his friends; he was kind enough to say to her when she began to study the part of Phædra, "I will design your costume for you, I cut it out, I will make it for you."

After long sittings in the study of Estampes, after one of three designs, which her friend had made in water-colours, had been selected, and after a joint inspection of the confection of the costume at the costumier's, after it had been tried on several times, remade and retouched, and the tragedienne had found it charming, on this occasion she complained that it suited her very badly.

"But look, old man, that does not suit at all there; and you call that pretty, that great smooth plate of metal which puckers!"

"But, my dear child, this is a tunic you are wearing, is it not? And you must recollect that I have only reproduced the bas-relief of the Villa Borghese which we looked at together."

"Villa Borghese, Villa Borghese; were there skirts in those days? But the difficulty is that we wear them now. I cannot, even to please you, act with nothing but my skin beneath it!"

"What did you ask me for? A costume which had style of an ancient character."

"Ancient character, yes; but with skirts! Then the colours of these things, do you like them?" she said, in the way which actresses have of always being concerned with the dresses of the other women who play with them.

"I should prefer the cloudy things which Aricie wears; your colours, you see, are a painter's colours, the colours for a picture."

A little out of patience, with friendly contempt in his smiling eyes, the old painter spoke to her of historical accuracy, and La Faustin, like the great artist she was, replied just like a woman.

"You see, old man, it is a question not so much of being historical as of being pretty. As the first performance is only the day after tomorrow, can't you arrange with the costumier to alter my costume a little here, and make it hang better there, and brighten up the colours?"

Holding up her tunic, and holding it back against herself with her two hands, with the idea of making the ill-humour vanish from the old man's face, La Faustin, with the twisting of the loins of a Spanish dancer, outlined a droll step from the cachucha.

XIII

ONE of those sleeps, interrupted every moment by a sudden awakening, when the sleeper finds herself sitting upright with her mouth still sounding with the fierce tirade of her feverish somnambulism—that is an actress's sleep before a first performance; that was like La Faustin's sleep the night following the dress rehearsal, during the long hours of which night the sleeping tragedienne was the amorous woman of Racine's tragedy.

Early, very early, she got out of bed, being unable to overcome a disturbing insomnia which seemed to burn the skin, and which made here turn to places where her body had not rested for the coolness of the bed-clothes.

She put on a dressing-gown, opened the window and leant upon the ledge.

Outside snow was falling, though the temperature was that of a spring day, and the snow, under the breath of the south wind, had nothing wintry about it, but had the white, warm friendliness of pale flowers, and in which the Christmas roses half opened. Then this snow was lit by a milky ray, like the light of an alabaster lantern, and this soft white day was full of something enervating, almost voluptuous.

La Faustin was suddenly tempted to walk in this white thing, to feel upon her face the refreshing rush of the snowy breeze. Only the evening before her sister had asked her to get Blancheron to undertake a little matter of business for her, and by a singular chance she had not seen him. She made up her mind to execute the commission herself, and pay her lover a morning visit.

Already La Faustin was walking along the street, hindering the passers-by, without the haste, chilly contraction and bad temper of the cold, but with the hurry of blithe and cheerful people who muse as they walk, of young men humming words of love, and of young women with a corset in a paper trotting along without looking where they are going.

Reaching at the top of the Rue d'Amsterdam the house where Blancheron had a lodging on the ground-floor, the porter informed the visitor just as she was preparing to knock, "The gentleman is not in his room; madam will find him in his fencing-school."

La Faustin passed under the arch, crossed a little garden, at the end of which Blancheron had put up an elegant school, where he had an hour's practice every day with an army instructor.

In the fencing-school La Faustin found no one but the master-at-arms, picking up foils and other things from the floor.

"What, no one here!" said La Faustin, tired out by the slope of the street, as she sank down upon the end of the bench.

"No," replied the instructor, getting up from the ground, displaying knickers of ticking with moist patches, and a young face still animated by the struggle. "No. Monsieur Blancheron has just gone out with one of his friends who is going to fight, and who looked in for a minute to get his hand in. The gentleman was not very easy to deal with, and he gave me some hard knocks."

"But that is new," exclaimed La Faustin, pointing with a partly-gloved hand to a group of ancient and modern fencing-swords,

and she began to examine them with a little of the weariness of one who had a deal of trouble to rise from a seat in which she was very comfortable.

"Then you say he has gone out," she resumed in a few minutes in a suave voice, accompanied by little imperceptible quivers of her nostrils.

In this hall, where a series of fights had taken place, where muscular activity had been expended in a kind of fury, where drops of blood had moistened the floor; in this hall, impregnated with the secretions of strength, the still smoking pads and sandals from the skin covered with sweat gave out the wild and exciting smell of a man, tickling the feminine senses in their troubled and lascivious hours.

La Faustin got up, went to the door, then, just as she was going out, made two or three uncertain turns, and finally sat down again in the place she had just left.

The master-at-arms continued to try each weapon and take it to a dark cupboard at the end of the room.

The master-at-arms was reddish-brown, with short, curly hair, had a little coarse moustache,

and the fearless expression of a bravo of the Court of the Valois, with a neck like a bullock, though very white, with the suppleness and feline elasticity and rapidity of movement which spread around him the bitter perfume of youth.

La Faustin looked at him, and while she did so her eyes became hot, and she felt the beating of the arteries of her temples.

"M. Blancheron did not say when he would be back?" remarked La. Faustin to break the silence.

"No," said the young man, still engaged upon his duties, and failing to notice the woman's attention

La Faustin remained nailed to the bench by magnetic power.

Little by little, she could only see the things around her in a vague, trembling, dazzling way; obtuse images crossed the void of her brain among the buffets of heat; a strong circulation carried through her veins warm weighty blood. She felt all the intellectual warmth of her depart and fly to other parts of her body; she had no longer a will, and there was in her ardent, moist being only sensual desire, the

unbridled and frenzied appetite of a young animal, and that in a dull transport, a torpid contraction, a collective immobility, and a nervous crossing of the legs, resembling a defence against herself.

Then at that moment the woman's look, that look charged with wine and sleep, the look of intoxication beneath heavy eyelids, became obstinately fixed upon the young master-at-arms.

"You——" she began, a quickly-interrupted phrase.

"Yes, madam?"

"Nothing!" she said savagely.

But their eyes met, conversed in a flash; the man indicated with a look the dark room. The woman got up from the bench with the resigned shrug of the shoulders of a vanquished creature, and joined the man.

Immediately the door was violently reopened, and La Faustin was pursued and captured in the large room by the man with eyes aflame, who tried to force her to return to the dark place. They struggled, body to body, and she dealt him with furious energy the blows in the face by which a woman defends herself from a rape by a person

who is a horror to her. At last, by a supreme effort, she snatched herself from his arms, and with her dress torn, disappeared into the little garden, hearing from the outside the young master-at-arms cry out upon the threshold of the fencing-school, in anger and astonishment, "What a strange lady! Madam desires, and then, and then madam does not!"...

XIV

"I RECEIVED your message, and here I am," said Bonne-Ame the morning after the scene at the fencing-school, as she entered La Faustin's room, adding as she advanced, with the inquiring eyes of a magistrate, "Has my chaste sister committed some enormity, then?"

In the obscurity of a little drawing-room, with closed shutters, the tragedienne was lying on the carpet in a pose of desolation and humiliation, ther hair down, her bare feet in slippers, her body, as if broken and without elasticity, in a creased dressing-gown, which looked as if it had been wept upon.

At the sight of her sister La Faustin hid her face in a cushion, and cried in a voice intersected by nervous sobs, and with her face hidden in the rough embroidery, "I am ashamed! I have a horror of myself! No, I should never dare to repeat it!"

"Good," said her sister. "I see what it is. An unreasonable complaisance for some ragamuffin; and it is this trifle that makes you a repentant Magdalene like this?"

"No, I did not do it, I tell you!" repeated La Faustin in a tone of revolt.

"Ah, well, then, if you yourself resisted, why disturb me?. I am going away."

"Stop; don't go. I must tell you—confide in you certain things." And she said in an unaccountable tone, "You are the drain of my heart!"

La Faustin began to narrate the scene of the day before. Her sister listened like a cat lapping milk, amused at the adventure, filled with that profound and secret joy which a woman's vicious nature experiences at the degradation and loss of respect of a friend.

"Oh, wicked girl, the story amuses you; you are laughing!" cried La Faustin, as she suddenly stood up to her sister. "Oh, the misfortune of being born your sister, of having the same blood in my veins, and cursed be the cradle in which we lay together! Without you I should have been—do you hear?—an honourable woman. Ah, how bad you were when quite a little girl! You it was who urged and dragged me on, for evil amuses you; you find it funny!"

Bonne-Ame, who in the course of the tragedienne's life had already experienced two or three similar scenes, and who knew that on these occasions her sister felt the need of throwing upon her the weakness of her own flesh, waited quietly till the end of the paroxysm, quietly repeating between her teeth, "Curse your relations, my girl, if it relieves your mind."

Exasperated by this ironical quiet, La Faustin put her face quite close to her sister's and shouted in her face, "You are alone responsible for my degraded instincts, my drunken habits, my love of vulgarity, and you it is, always you, who at times make me common, and such as I know you to be from head to foot! Oh, the mud, the mud of which you are entirely made, and of which I have a little!" And La Faustin's hands and nails clawed around her sister's face, without, however, touching her.

Her sister gently put down the actress's poor nervous hands, and said to her, "Really it is very unreasonable to get into this state the day of a first performance!"

"I sent to say I would not play; that I was ill. The theatre doctor will come to see me; but it is all the same to me, I shall not play."

La Faustin dropped down upon a corner of the canopy, her head between her hands, which after a few minutes parted and showed for a moment a face lit up with happiness, in which no trace of her former resentment was visible.

"Little sister, I am all the same very happy—yes, very happy—for if that had happened I should never have dared to go back to the other, the one you know; and yesterday it was only

the thought of him which saved me at the last minute."

Then a grey cloud passed over her face, and, her sister's presence entirely forgotten, she began to talk to herself as she walked from one end of the little drawing-room to the other in a kind of cerebral excitement.

"Yet I am made to love with all that is noble in a woman; it is the distinction or intelligence of a man which pleases me, and my love seems to me like the love one reads a little about in books. Then why these raptures, why these mad moments, when I feel that I am nothing more than a female? Surely there is about me a fatality, like that of the woman whose part I take. Oh, this Venus of the ancient tragedies!" Upon the tragedienne, thus brought back to her part, there suddenly and in an almost visible fashion descended a superstitious terror of the goddess, whose name up to that day had been an empty and dead sound in her mouth, and who was suddenly resuscitated in the faith of her mind in all the ancient malevolence of her power, mysterious and troubling to the senses of the human creature.

Then suddenly changing her tone: "'Good,'

I said to myself beforehand; 'you shall pass the day in doing something not tiring,' and this sort of thing is very tiring."

"Ah, Juliette!" said Bonne-Ame, who had opened at random a little volume of Racine lying on a corner of the table, and began to read—

- "''Tis no longer hidden ardour in my veins, But Venus entirely to her prey attached.'
- "How do you render those two lines?"
- "I say them thus," answered La Faustin, and then she repeated them ingenuously.
- "Yes, that is how you said them at the dress rehearsal," said Bonne-Ame, without admiration.
- "Come, tell me frankly, does not that satisfy you?"
- "Yes, perhaps, detached as the lines are; to judge, I must hear them together."

La Faustin spontaneously, without her sister insisting further, gave the whole of the speech.

- "It is good, but do you think that is absolutely all you can do with it?"
- "I will repeat the speech line by line," replied the tragedienne, with an impatient jerk of her body.

La Faustin began to play as if she were at the theatre, ending each line with this phrase, "Is that all right?"

Bonne-Ame, shaking her head, advancing her pouting lips, uttering monosyllables of doubt, icy interjections and despairing "peuhs!" worked her sister up into a state of irritation, a peevish effort and furious quest; and never appearing completely satisfied with the new intonation, she revised the gestures and the last intention.

At the end of an hour of this contradiction, torment, and disguised and stubborn contest with her sister's talent, she succeeded in bringing the tragedienne back to a woman once more. With a vibrating voice and passionate gesture La Faustin was engaged in displaying all her effects before Bonne-Ame.

At that moment the theatre doctor, partly opening the door of the little drawing-room, launched these words at the actress from outside—

"What did I tell you this morning, that there was nothing the matter with you, that you would play this evening! I am off to take the good news to the theatre.

The old painter followed the doctor, the re-

toucher of the tragedienne's costumes, who had promised to come in person to give an eye to the corrections in Phædra's costumes.

While La Faustin in the hands of the painter and the costumier tried on, in the little drawing-room the windows of which had been opened to the sun, the amended and corrected costume, her sister hurried off, remarking to Guenegaud, whom she met on the stairçase, "She is going to play."

Then came the dentist to brighten the enamel of her teeth, and the manicurist to revive the mother-of-pearl of the nails, etc., etc., the whole series of minute and secret practices which for a first night result in the restoration to youth and make-up of a face and body, was gone through, as the actor or actress desires to be, so to speak, quite new on that night.

In the feverish haste of these thousand occupations, all these little serious cares, little by little the morning's fixed idea was dissipated, and La Faustin was nothing but an actress heart and soul in the evening's performance. So detached from the events of the previous day was she, that during the quarter of an hour remaining before dinner she played bézique with

little Luzy in the same drawing-room in which a few hours before she was dying with grief and shame.

In the midst of the game, which she played with a side-comb in her hair to keep it tidy, one of her greatest admirers, the old Duchess de Taillebourg, was announced. To bring her luck at the evening's performance, she had brought her a tiny morsel of an old family relic as well as a ninety-six pound pot of rouge made by the widow Martin, discovered in a cupboard which had not been opened since the first Revolution.

The actress, a prey to a kind of clownish and asinine gaiety, jumping up from the card-table, leapt with a "houp!" at Auriol almost over her partner; then reaching the door of the great drawing-room, the diverse and changeable woman returned with fine dignified manner, saying, "Now it is the turn of the Princess!"

At four o'clock La Faustin dined, partaking of the light repast she usually had on the days she was acting—an egg, soup, a dozen Ostend oysters and fruit.

"Oh, it is quite useless," she said to herself,

as she warmed her hands at the fire for a moment after finishing her dinner; her hands had been like ice for three or four days. "They will be like it till the end of the first act, then they will be too warm."

At five o'clock, she got into her carriage for her hour's ride in the Champs Élysées, that drive alone in the dusk in which she had found some of her happiest effects. •

At six o'clock she went into the Théâtre Français, just as she did the Odéon, to have before her two hours to rehearse with the prompter in her dressing-room.

But at the end of an hour she threw herself down upon her couch, to try and obtain by means of closed eyes, and an immobility almost terrifying, that rest which would enable her later on to act with all her dramatic force.

XV

"LET me pass, friends." It was La Faustin, who, trembling in the wings, murmured this phrase several times, dispersing with her outstretched hands the void before her, long before Œnone had finished her speech to Hippolytus.

Now she is upon the stage, under her heavy costume, which seems too heavy for her weakness. She drops into the ancient seat on one side, and addresses her dying adieus to the sun, one hand raised with an effort above her eyes as if to protect them from his blinding glory, an arm hanging by her side, profiled in the beautiful lines of august dejection.

There is a burst of applause.

Then the amorous queen, in a voice going straight to the heart, which the past century called interesting, began the narrative of her secret flame for the son of Theseus, and each line she said she felt little by little dissipate the atmosphere of separation which at a first

performance, on the rising of the curtain, exists between the public and the actor, that lack of contact almost untranslatable, and only comparable to the intervention of transparent gauze, which success dissipates and sweeps away bit by bit as the play progresses. The giving way of the daughter of the flesh, bowed down beneath the anger of Venus, the mad disorder, the trouble, the furious transport, the affecting return of her avowed lover-all these movements and sudden changes in the soul of Phædra La Faustin rendered and gave the emotion to the public by the most touching modulations, by the lightest transitions, by the most subtle shades, by all the resources and finesse of the dramatic art, by the marvellous employment of the medium, of the fulness of voice on a low i note, and by the conduct, through a succession of graduated and touching tones, of speeches which she achieved and detached by a trick of strength. Join to the art of diction, gentle or proud gestures, mute action speaking better than words, unexpected halts, and a concentrated and dolorous face assuming at times a lethargic aspect.

When La Faustin reached the end of the

couplet, "My ill comes from afar," there is more than applause, there is the approving rise of a conquered and subdued house.

At the end of the act La Faustin fell exhausted on to the couch, which she as usual had placed in the wings, to recover her breath for a moment, and there was visible upon her neck, back and shoulders the working movement of the nerves like that which comes after violent physical exercise.

After a few minutes the tragedienne ascended to her dressing-room, leaning upon Guenegaud.

Guenegaud was the dog and shadow of La Faustin at the theatre. Always present at every performance, the whole of the time she did not lose sight of her mistress for a moment, following her with her eyes from the wings, enjoying the admiration of enthusiastic stage-hands whom she desired to kiss, and always at her side and ready to hand her a bottle of smelling-salts or throw a wrap round her shoulders, or put a fur over her feet.

Reaching the actress's dressing-room, Guene-gaud drew from her pocket a bottle full of cold bouillon, made her swallow a mouthful, and put the bottle back into her pocket; for the bottle

never left her possession. This woman of the people had a vague notion that a tragedienne of former times named Lecouvreur had been poisoned, and her imagination having long worked upon this incident, which she knew very imperfectly, she had got into her shallow and fanciful head the fixed idea that rivals jealous of her mistress's talent desired to get rid of her by poison.

She had few visitors between the first and second acts, and these did not give La Faustin the exact idea of her success, did not relieve her perplexity during the interval, for in the midst of the acting of her part she had but vaguely seen what was taking place in the house. She anxiously inquired of the bores and the payers of idle compliments, amiable, empty-headed people, biting her tongue as she did so, and making the saliva come back to her dry mouth.

She played the second act, the decisive act for the consecration of her talent, and this time she had hardly entered her dressing-room when the door opened and, presented by Luzy, a little man with distorted features and flaming eyes, wearing a sac coat, entered like a madman.

He was the great modern sculptor, he who first reproduced in stone, marble and bronze the nervous life of the flesh. He came, wildly enthusiastic, overflowing with admiration, which he expressed in phrases which were almost brutal, to ask the actress to sit to him for a statue of Tragedy. Without being disturbed by the other persons present, he forced her to resume a pose she had had for a moment, raising her familiarly from her couch and arranging her tunic upon her almost by force. He repeated, taking a few steps backwards, treading on the feet behind him, "Superb, it will be superb!" The sculptor followed by people bearing illustrious names, by celebrities of all sorts, old habitués of the theatre, dilettante dramatists, critics and fine judges, coming to confirm the actress in the certainty of her triumph.

In a moment the boxes of bonbons broughted by the tragedienne's admirers were in such large number that they served as partitions between the women who had found seats in the dressing-room.

In the third act there commenced to descend upon the wife of Theseus a great sadness, a dark and amorous desire for death; her hands, with gestures almost more than living, gave her robes the folds of a shroud, and the tragedienne appeared to the house shuddering and moved to the utmost depths of her being, and beautiful with the funereal beauty of a Venus of the sepulchre.

After this scene La Faustin met Ragache, who was bringing her an account of the conversation in the corridors, the secret attitude of the press to her, and the conversation of the journalists overheard at the dressing-room doors. Theo found no talent in Racine, but he had made a graceful outline for her, and had decided in his notice, in spite of the infectious classic leanings of his chief, not to speak at all about the Louis XIV poet, but to speak all the time of her. Saint-Victor she ought to see. He was out of his mind on first nights, which were bad. It was a good omen; besides, he had always treated her well. As for the 'critic Chose, by chance he wore a clean white vest, and to him Ragache had made the remark that it would make him kind. The critic Machin was engaged in displaying his enthusiasm in the little theatre of the Rue Montpensier, where one takes something warm which smells of lamp

oil. The critic with the monocle was not there, but he had sent his mistress to represent him, and Georgine had given her word that her account would be favourable to the actress. The critic of the France Libérale was perfectly well aware that there had been a falling off in his paragraphs, and people no longer read him; he was in a position in which he had to invent some one, and he was going to invent her. Villemessant had said that in that annoying thing called a tragedy she had produced on him the effect of being less annoying than other tragediennes. She would have all the little papers for certain. There was only old Janin, the possessor of a severe attack of gout, whom he had found stranded on a seat, in list shoes and red woollen sleeves, suffering horribly, and complaining in the midst of the applause that she lacked a lover's tenderness in the second act; he would make reservations, but on the whole she was sure of an excellent notice.

The tragedienne was applauded enough to bring the house down in the fourth act; and when the curtain fell on the fifth in hearty acclamation, the whole house called for La Faustin.

After the recall, hanging on to Guenegaud's arm, which the tragedienne's hand clutched so tightly as to make her cry out, La Faustin reached her dressing-room and dropped upon her little make-up seat, her legs straight out and stiff before her in a sort of cataleptic state. Completely quiet, she made no reply to the frightened words of the old woman, who wished to go and fetch the theatre doctor, except by negative movements of the head, and by touching her mouth and neck with a gesture, indicating that the nerves serving for the emission of the voice were so contracted for the moment that it was impossible to speak.

She remained thus nearly three-quarters of an hour, at the end of which, after a long sigh, in which her being seemed to distend and loosen, she could pronounce a few words.

She then went into the little drawing-room opening out of her dressing-room, which was full of people, and from which by the open door could be seen, stretching along the corridor, a procession like that outside the vestry after a fashionable wedding. Immediately an avalanche of excited women jostled the men as they came, and seized with that nervous effusion which

the theatre's struggles always produce, rushed into the arms of La Faustin. She received emotional caresses, never-ending embraces, a delirium of tenderness, in which soon men and women, without distinction of sex, embraced Phædra, who, with the paint wiped off her face carelessly, the body of a thin seraph lost in the folds of a brown cloak which had been quickly thrown over her, went to right and left among the arms which pressed her like a body without bones, having the floating undulation of a rag shaken by the wind, and the while the actress repeated in a tone of blunted emotion, and with a face displaying at the same time happiness and disorder, "Ah, children, children!"

Then the people with congratulations gradually dispersed, and there only remained the men the actress had invited to supper.

La Faustin felt the need to walk, to "breathe" the street," as she called it. They set out on foot in a body, crossing the Rue Saint-Honoré, disturbing the little groups still talking at the doors of the cafés, which were being closed, of the evening's performance, and from which here and there came, "There is La Faustin!" And they walked in gay battalions through the night, with

the burning gaiety of people prepared to feast till daybreak; and the youngest of the group carried on spirited dialogues with the cabdrivers, which continued till they turned out of sight.

XVI

LA FAUSTIN'S guests were assembled in the grand saloon of the little hotel of the Rue Godot de Maurice waiting while the tragedienne changed her dress.

There was gathered the diverse, mixed world of the suppers at great first nights; there littérateurs, painters, savants, politicians, generals, doctors, celebrities of all sorts elbowed each other, among whom there are always intruders, come no one knows how or upon whose invitation, unknown nonentities, wearing beards, tiepins, Cossack trousers, or foreign decorations

arousing curiosity, whose name every one is uselessly asking every one else the whole evening. Froups talked on vague subjects without animation and in phrases with long intervals between them; solitary guests went into corners to look long at the curios with a weary look; and leaning back in an arm-chair, by the light of a lamp placed behind him a reporter wrote in pencil on the leaves of a book of cigarette paper an account of the gathering.

La Faustin entered in her supper robe. She wore a sort of tea-gown of cream satin, the facings of which were velvet of the same shade: it was trimmed with old silver thread and embroidered with tuberoses formed of coloured beads. In her hair was a piece of metallic-green foliage, the green of the wings of a Spanish fly. In this dress, in the brightness and warmth, in the midst of the scintillation and richness of those strange flowers of stone, that part of the woman's breast which appeared in the narrow square of her low-cut dress had the whiteness of a white flower in the shadow of a cave, and the changing reflections of green electric light showing up the foliage in her hair at each movement of her head, put upon the top of her face a

strange and fantastic beauty, and gave her smiling glance something of the look of an angelic demon.

There was a movement of amorous admiration through the room, and La Faustin, still excited by the performance, in the midst of the circle which had formed around her, as she gave furious little kicks at her train, began to speak with singular nervousness of all the incidents of the evening, of the effect spoiled by a reply given too soon, of the lack of intelligence of the chief of the claque and of his coughers from the Odéon, who had followed him to the Comédie Française -recriminations in which her broken voice recovered its accents, its brightness, its little strident cries. Then at the steward's words, "Madam, the supper is served," she quickly took the arm of an unknown young man, to whom she had listened for some minutes with singular attention, and leading the way, turned her head and said, "Gentlemen, there is no ceremony here, you sit where you will or where you can." La Faustin sat at the middle of the table, her sister faced her.

This was a gathering first of hungry persons in a supper-room, odorous with the flavour of the lobster and truffle, before a table with a damask cloth, massive plate, cut-glass, baskets of exotic flowers, illuminated by the glamour of former suppers, with the white light of candles in candelabra, above a lustre like glistening tears, and beneath a ceiling and between walls covered by bright tapestries showing as if floating in the mist of daybreak the rosy nudities of the goddesses of Olympus.

The silence was succeeded by the hubbub and confusion of the first words—words caused by the food, and among which this phrase was most prominent: "A supper with candles; bravo! If the women knew how beautiful these candles make their skin appear, there would not be a lamp or gas-jet in a dining-room in Paris."

La Faustin said to the young man whom she, had sitting at her right, "Oh, what a pretty vibrating voice you have, sir! No, you can have no idea of the seduction of your voice upon my person, it really goes further than the ear. But speak a little so that I can listen to you. Yes, there is some resemblance to the voice of Delaunay, with something more captivating to the nerves. Some days I

am quite sure you would bring tears to my eyes 'at once!"

The artist leant towards him and listened as one approaches an instrument which moves the soul.

"It is very charming, entirely charming," La Faustin repeated in a smiling ecstasy, her head on one side, almost as if she were watching the words come out of his mouth. "Really, sir, you ought to spend a few hours every day with me. To hear you talk and read would be a real feast. There are notes in your voice in which at the same time there is a sob and laugh. Ah, but a declaration from you would be very dangerous."

Then she began to laugh coquettishly. Suddenly interrupting her laughter, La Faustin addressed the table: "Gentlemen, I can recommend this fish, it is a sterlet from the Volga, a present from a friend there who sent it to me etherized. Although by this means it appeared insensible, it was not quite dead, and that is the way it is kept fresh to this end of the world."

Then La Faustin turned again to her neighbour; she turned with the tenderness of one side of the body, with the curve of her lines of love, which can be seen every day at a dinner or supper when a woman is sitting near a man who pleases her. In this body, one side of which, the side next the indifferent neighbour, appeared dull and inert, the other was a trepidation of graces, a see-saw of incitement and caresses of the muscles, an amusing release of atoms of gallantry. The woman is, so to speak, animated by a living life on this side; there is a tremor only in the shoulder which touches this neighbour, a palpitation only in the breast which has him near to it, a serpentine undulation only in the member and the flesh in contact with the odours of the pleasing person.

Bonne-Ame, in the midst of this crowd superior to herself, affected manner and propriety. She talked a lot about the tapestries she was making for the church of the village where Carsonac had a country house.

Carsonac also was ill at ease and overshadowed at this supper, for he found himself by the side of an inscrutable person, and talked to him seriously of how Balzac bored him, of the narrow horizon in which he enclosed him, of the obstacles to the development of his theatre, and of the perpetual encounters which caused him to reject scenes better constructed than those of a novelist. To this the other man replied, "I agree with you"; and this caused the popular author to ask himself, without being able to give a satisfactory answer, whether this was slightly intoxicated familiarity or irony.

Fragments of phrases could be heard, such as-

"Good, tell it at once. A soul and hair; but it is very unfashionable to-day, it is the type of the woman of the world of 1830. The women of the world of to-day——"

"Women of the world, women of the world of to-day," cried an eminent writer, interrupting the first speaker, "are thin, lean and bony women, with so little body, so small a place in their hearts for love; women with the greenish tint of sickness, with lips and eyes badly painted, beings of unhealthy phantom appearance, in whom one expects nothing but a painted face and a biting tongue. Truly, theirs is not a beauty for the drawing-lessons of the primary schools, but I must say that in the state of degenerate passion which the nineteenth-

century man has reached, this type is very exciting."

"Turn out that low fellow!" interposed La Faustin in a voice full of caress.

"Have I said something not of the utmost propriety?" said the eloquent Rabelaisian, with perfect frankness.

. The conversation was taken up by a statesman, who was obviously a ladies' man—a man with a young face and white hair.

"Yes, gentlemen, you can be as indignant as you please, and treat yourself to all possible articles upon morality. A little debauchery is necessary in a state; it moderates customs, it makes society human, and it refines the men. All the very great men of all ages have been libertines."

"Oh! oh!"

"You know," murmured in his neighbour's ear a guest with a doll's face of a dirty red, which looked like an apostle's head carved out of a faded radish—"you know this Government is the weakest of all time."

The end of the statesman's speech sank down into a fusillade of sharp repartee, sounding from right and left like pistol-shots,

"Intelligent, this dramatic story-writer, he has the æsthetics of a theatre lamp-lighter!"

"That actress distinguished, one would think she were the *vivandière* of a troop of fauns!"

"He does not love that girl; why, lately he gave her ten thousand francs to clear off her debts, and you don't call that love, and the dearest love too!"

"Don't speak to me of him, he is an imbecile with superior ideas and transcendental aims!"

Paris is thus made; the courtesan whose price is twenty-five louis, costs a Napoleon to a member of the Jockey Club, and the twelve-hundred-francs servant M. de la Rochefoucauld has if he wishes for three hundred.

"The enormous protection of music by the State astonishes you—it is very simple; all the Jewish bankers are lovers of music."

"A" man with liberal ideas and who wears clothes of an ecclesiastical cut usually settles; always mistrust him."

"Oh, the insufferable talker! She is a woman who only understands the *Eginètes*, and who declares that Sweden is sympathetic because it is an innocent country."

"I bet you one hundred sous to a halfpenny that it is this financier."

"Excuse me,"—it was Blancheron who spoke
—"you are talking of a very strong man. I
have not the reputation of being a fool in Stock
Exchange business, have I? This is what
happened to me. One day leaving my house
he let fall from his pocket—purposely, of course—
a very important order to purchase. Ah, well,
gentlemen, you understand me. I did not even
dare to oppose him."

At this moment La Faustin noticed her neighbour on her right placing with the greatest care the bones of his fish upon the cloth by the side of his plate.

This brought to her face the childish pout of a little girl caught with an empty box of bonbons.

She only answered him in monesyllables, and the curve and amiability of the lines of her body gradually withdrew from the young man with the fish-bones, and by little stages, insensible approaches, and a half change of front skilfully executed, veered round to her neighbour on her left.

He was a philosopher, a man of the world

professing good looks, goodness and honesty for the use of the great society ladies, a sort of lay director of the nineteenth century, providing his clients with Plato in place of the Gospels, choosing their wool for their tapestries, sending them the Paris gossip when they are spending the summer in the country, or the winter at Nice, and if necessary keeping them during confinement, and reading to them St. Augustine's City of God.

Good-looking in the manner of a good-looking substitute, and endowed with somewhat professional graces, he was the darling of the women, who were always ready to contend for his favours.

He was a philosopher, for immediately he perceived the mistress of the feast approach to pay her court to him, with ardent eyes unveiling her nudity, fluent compliments, and that gross admiration with which the university fops assassinate women with their love, he said, "You are eating nothing, absolutely nothing."

"Oh, on first nights I am only thirsty; as for the gross things which demand ugly mastication, I don't think the operation of eating is a very pretty one for a woman." "You perhaps have an ambition to feed upon the sublime in food; but stop, you have here at your table a sort of good chamber deity, a decomposer of simple bodies; ask him for the receipt."

"It is curious," said the chemist, who had heard the end of the dialogue, "that it was not to a woman that the idea of this elegance first occurred, but to a man, a savant, a canon of Notre Dame. The good man, annoyed by the time it was necessary to devote to eating, as well as a little disgusted by its materiality, had made the sublime in food, with which he fed himself in a non-material form, a few drops contained in a little scent-bottle. But after two or three years of this the canon had a stricture of the stomach which killed him. It is very gross to say so, but still, for the rest of us simple mortals, men or women, ambrosia is of no use, and the most sublime food is still turkey and truffles."

"Talking of turkey and truffles," said another guest, "do you know the only three times in the whole of his life that Rossini wept? It is authentic, as I read it in a letter from the master to Cherubini: the day that the first

performance of his opera was hissed; the day he heard Paganini play the violin for the first time; and the day when on the Guard Lake he dropped into the water a truffled turkey he had in his arms."

"That is a good story, but as the conversation is about food, may I be allowed to tell one about the heavenly food of the Comte de Marcellus? The great Catholic noble would only communicate at his castle with a host stamped with his arms. One day the priest saw with terror that the stock was exhausted; he took the risk of offering an ordinary host to the noble and pious mouth, and excused himself by this phrase: 'Pot-luck, Sir Count!'"

The philosopher continued to display his professorial seductions and to develop his amorous rhetoric to La Faustin, who in a vein of the utmost coquetry allowed him to continue and almost encouraged him. This first victory gave him the idea of insuring his triumph, by using a trick from the répertoire he had invented for the government and subjection of women, a most ingenious trick, but one which he employed in a too general way, with-

out profound enough knowledge of the female beings with whom he was dealing.

He looked at his neighbour for a moment with his piercing eyes, and said to her, "In your beauty there is a very particular character of intelligence; oh, I am a good judge in these matters; a character which denotes literary aptitudes; the talent of tragedy is separate and we are not speaking of it, but there exists in a latent state another talent. You ought to write about that which takes place under your eyes; try, I will advise you, I will guide you. If you only knew the charming things some society ladies do, thanks to my friendly direction."

La Faustin smiled. Unfortunately, she knew the dodge, which had been told her by a young woman to whom the philosopher had offered. himself a fortnight before to advise upon her prose, and the tragedienne was horribly wounded at being treated like the first innocent and ninny in the world.

"Thank you, my dear sir. Have you not taken out a patent for this discovery? A promise like that of the pen of Madame Sand made to young women of the lower classes, is

one of the insidious wiles of genius over woman; they abandon, don't they, their home, their husband and 'children? How fast does your class increase?"

For some time, without ceasing and without pity, La Faustin tormented the philosopher with her vicious, almost ferocious irony.

The man on La Faustin's right had taken the removal of the good graces of the mistress of the feast quite gaily. He had eaten much and drunk more, and he appeared to be in a state of smiling intoxication, his chin upon his waistcoat, a lock of his hair hanging down upon his forehead. He kept passing every minute his white hand through his black beard, while he hummed one of the songs of the province of his birth.

One moment swaying towards La Faustin he said, "Dear madam, at the beginning of the supper you spoke of the pleasure you would have in hearing me speak and read; by way of a parenthesis, I have a father, whose business as a cashier is a very intermittent one; now if you would care for this pleasure, he would undertake it every day for a few hours for five hundred francs a month."

"We will speak of your proposal another time, sir."

The young man imperturbably resumed stroking his beard and humming his song.

Then La Faustin began to fan her breast with the lace of her corsage, which she waved with her two hands. Leaning back, and retiring within her chair, there came over her face a look of almost laughable consternation, mixed with disdain, disgust, and almost hatred for the conversation of her two neighbours. She glanced round the table with a look which said narvely, "Is there no one who will have pity upon me and deliver me from my boredom?" Then, suddenly becoming perfectly still while her fingers traversed the whiteness of her throat, her weariness displayed itself physically by little involuntary tremors of her flesh.

Cleverness, the tilting with words, and the waggishness of ideas had ceased; in lowered voices, and in the elevation of their minds, little by little the general conversation died and degenerated into private talks, in which each one, returning to his occupation, work or thoughts, gratified his corner of the table with

the charming expansion of the deep intoxication of great minds at the end of a banquet well sprinkled with good wine.

"Every one ought to be taught the marvellous qualities of the material to be utilized," said one guest, leaning across to his fieighbour, as he twisted a cork in his fingers.

"Yes, the glorification of material; that is a fine book you ought to write."

"I should like to, but I cannot; I have not the writer's combination. It sometimes happens that I have the idea, but the next morning in the daylight, pen in hand, it is gone."

"The French language," said a foreign author, a giant with a gentle face—"the French language has the effect upon me of a kind of instrument, in which the inventor has simply sought clearness, logic in its widest sense, and he finds that at the actual time it is worked by the most nervous and sensitive people, seekers for the notation of indescribable sensations, and those least likely to be satisfied in the main with their healthy predecessors."

"Blood, now, is a rarety which one does not find at all." It was a physiologist, with a fine pensive head, a little ghostly, who spoke. "People no longer bleed. In my day there were bucketfuls of blood in the hospitals. Lately I needed some for my lectures; I could not obtain any. But for the old doctor, you know, the man who follows my lectures, I should have had none. He is an old pupil of Broussais, keeps up the tradition, and pricks the veins at every opportunity. Did he not say to me: 'I bleed people every day and water my flowers with it.' The method of killing or curing people entirely changes every twenty years."

A journalist with a Jordanesque face of thick and warty flesh, who jerked out his words in the stammering speech of an Alsatian, said, "St. Bartholomew has killed France; if France had become Protestant she would have been the greatest nation in Europe. You see in Protestant countries there exists a series of steps between the philosophy of the higher classes and the free thinking of the lower classes; in France, between the scepticism of the higher classes and the idolatry of the lowest there is an abyss, a gulf; before long you will see what this gulf will bring about."

"Egypt, Egypt," repeated in his neighbour's

ear an artist and a stylist for the moment unoccupied with the supper; "I am persecuted by
the idea of writing a few pages on this country;
a turfy land, with earth like indiarubber on
which footsteps do not sound. You only
know the Orient clearly and sharply defined.
There are plains, veils of imperceptible vapours,
becoming more intense the further the plains
extend, and in the grey vapour there are black
fellows, for it is very rare one meets with a
note of red. Ah, what a pretty shade blue
cotton cloth becomes in that light. I can see
all these fellows, with a light on the forehead
and the shoulder."

He made the gesture in space of putting two little touches on canvas.

"Yes, one needs a fine power of light to produce colour in these parts of neutral earth and sky, and a vegetation, too, sprouting from bituminous slime with nothing like verdure. No, I have found in painting no way to reproduce that."

While he spoke of the humid land afar off the whites of his feverish eyes grew in a strange fashion. He continued, "What is the night too! Eh, George?"—he spoke to a guest at the end of the table who did not hear him. "Do you recollect the hours we spent near a pyramid in that place occupied by a basket-maker? Oh, those hours, I wish to write something which will bring back the sensation to me!"

The painter-author became so absorbed, that the noise of the table no longer reached his ears.

"Pure science, science beautifully abstract, the science scornful of industrialism," said the chemist, "you see, is made up of aristocratic societies. The United States only seize upon and occupy themselves with our discoveries in their application; it is the same in Italy, where the disinterested savants belong to the old generation. In this century of money there is no more recruiting for careers of glory. In this country, what happens when a young man's instincts are too scientific? He embarks upon a career which half satisfies his tastes and half his desire for enrichment. He becomes a railway engineer, manager of an ironworks, or manager of a chemical works. Already that is beginning to happen in France, where the Polytechnic School turns out savants no longer,"

"That noise, that mellow sound of which I don't know how to give you the idea," said a young general, "and yet sometimes it returns to me and sounds in my ears. We were so close together, so crowded one on the top of the other, charging to the assault of the Malakoff, that I heard the bullets enter the bodies of those by my side with the sound of stones thrown into clay, and when the bullets met a bone they made the noise of a tree cracking with the frost. Ah, it is an ugly sound!"

"Oh, God, yes," let fall in little phrases as if in a dream the man with the scientific imagination, "still ten million years at the most there will be fuel and a possible temperature upon the surface of the earth. Then after that no more wood, no more coal, and there will be a glacial period. Then the remnant of humanity who are not frozen will be obliged to withdraw underground, and to install themselves in the galleries of the mines. They will feed on mushrooms, and as a god of light is always necessary for man's adoration, the underground man will worship marsh gas or fire-damp."

"But won't that life upon themselves without the distraction of the sun develop a terrible

metaphysical power?" said the savant's neighbour very seriously, his fat hands enthusiastically clasped upon the serviette at his chest.

"Gentlemen," said La Faustin suddenly, "you will find there a Cape wine shipped upon a Dutch vessel which was shipwrecked upon the coast at Schewningue more than a hundred years ago. It has just been discovered in casks encrusted with shell-fish on raising the cargo from the bottom of the sea; it is a wine which cost two hundred francs a bottle, and as it represents a kindness on the part of M. Blancheron, perhaps this is the time to drink it."

"And to drink the health of Phædra!" cried with one voice the whole table.

After pouring out the wine all the guests rose, and after the clinking of glasses the tragedienne was acclaimed with cries of "Long live Phædra!, Long live La Faustin!"

In the disorder of this toast, drunk standing, the young man with the musical voice said loudly, "It is a very funny thing, but while striving for the perpendicular I have lost my balance!"

The two sisters moved close together, and Bonne-Ame whispered in her sister's ear, "A

moment ago I would have wagered five pounds on your little neighbour's head."

"Ah, his music is very pretty if the man could be taken away. Did you bring him?"

"No; and the other one?"

"The other one; a regular honey-pot, of sour honey."

"Now," exclaimed La Faustin, passing alone into the drawing-room, "now for an orgie of Beethoven. Let us play, sing and dance from his works. I desire Beethoven till dawn. My nerves this evening need it."

. XVII

THE day after the first performance of Phadra and of the supper, which had lasted till near daybreak, La Faustin rose a prey to one of those dark sorrows, to one of those rendings of the heart without cause or reason, which

follow the great expenditure of the nervous fluid in the emotion of joy and feverish pleasure.

She breakfasted without opening the theatrical papers which appeared that morning giving accounts of the previous night's performances.

She was disgusted with herself at home, she was disgusted at the thought of going out, and feared the visits of those she loved the best. At her awakening she suddenly discovered a sickening lack of interest in everything that on other days interested her the most. This nonchalant renunciation of herself to a will, a desire, a caprice, and this lack of eagerness for anything in the world displayed itself in a particular sensation, proper to black, intense and splenetic ennui; everything seemed greythe sky, her rooms, even Guenegaud—in a, semblance of the discoloration of the colours of life, and with something in the vision like that which finds its way into a woman's eyes on passing from a brilliantly-lighted ball-room into an ante-chamber with the gas turned down. The sorrowful desolation of this morning was not the cloud which one of life's annovances brings to a woman's face, and which is dispelled

in a little by the struggles of the nerves; but was a dark and momentous disenchantment of existence, the wearied falling back of a creature upon itself, with the time of stoppage of the smiling work of the brain and of the continued childishness of projects and castles in Spain, which only cease in that sort of ennui and in the sentiment of death.

La Faustin mounting to her chamber sat down by the corner of the fire-place, with an uncertain and vacant look.

She cast around her two or three times glances from left to right upon the carpet, as if attracted by the appearance of things which did not exist; she got up, went to her bed, and with slow, almost unconscious gestures began to turn down the coverlet, and commenced to undress.

In the midst of her undressing she rang for Guenegaud and said to her, "Close the shutters, bring me a lighted lamp, and don't admit any visitors."

"Is madam ill?"

"No, but I am very bored to-day."

When she was almost undressed she went into one of the cupboards, and out of the midst

of her nightdresses selected a little volume from the seven or eight which were mixed up with the clothing-bags and furs, and put it under her pillow.

Then directly, nestling snugly under the clothes in the pleasure of the commencing warmth and the midst of the fictitious night illuminated by a shaded lamp, La Faustin's face stood out with a little square patch of light upon it, with a little line of humid light at the edge of the lower lash and putting a moist light at the bottom of the pupil, with a cedilla of light in the corner of the mouth, in the dimple of the smile, and all the rest of the face in a caressing shadow with wandering reflections upon its delicate curves.

In the unhappy times of your life, to escape from the unfriendly hours of the day have you never thought of going far away, of absenting yourself from existence during these hours, by the reading of a book by a man with an extravagant, unreasoning and lunatic imagination, and that in the somewhat hallucinatory surroundings of bed and darkness? Ah, well, that was the expedient La Faustin discovered.

She turned to the wall, turning towards the

lamp the sinuous undulating line of her draped shoulders; the wanton curls at her neck lay upon the bed-clothes as she commenced to read the little book, which she held with one hand under her nose so that the light might strike its pages.

The pages of the little book transported the woman's mind into a strange world, a world of countries of terrifying grandeur; illimitable space, infinite extent, moving waters, the light of fiery planets, architecture of the dream of a Piranese, an incessant file of myriads of human beings in eternal procession, and the interminable sight of women in the robes of the Orient seated upon azure couches.

In her contemplation in the closed chamber, made like night, in her warm torpor, in the vague life of the couch La Faustin saw the approach of the things she was reading about as in a vision.

In these supernatural lands all the past returned without order, haphazard, the whole history of humanity, overturned as if in a kaleidoscope, appeared around her in brief magic pictures, every moment upset by changes and intervention of time and scene. She found her-

self in the midst of the Court of Charles I. and suddenly the ball, the music, the bedecked ladies disappeared at the clapping of two hands-hands which were visible to none-before the entry of the Consul Paulus Emilius, surrounded by a cohort of Roman centurions bearing the scarlet tunic at the end of a lance, and acclaimed in the distance by the cheers of the Roman legions. She wandered amid the panic of the rout of a modern army, surrounded by the tramp of thousands of invisible men in flight, and she saw the silhouettes of tall tragic women, who said as they clasped their hands, "Good-bye for ever," and disappeared with a sigh at the word "Death," which fell from the lips of a pale Proserpine throned in a livid apotheosis. The echo, too long repeated, "Good-bye for ever, good-bye for ever."

While she was in bed reading, there were many things which escaped her, many things to which her lack of instruction did not give her the key, but in reality this book was to her great personality what a fairy tale is to a child, whose tiny intelligence perceives only the marvel of the book.

As fast as La Faustin read The Opium

Eater the intoxication of the imagination of De Quincey took possession of her, and carried her away by a succession of intense mental sensations, from the reality of life, from the boredom of the day and from her bad attack of nerves.

XVIII

THE green-room belonging to the actors of the Comédie Française contains an interesting and curious museum, in which all the old dramatic glories, painted or sculptured, live upon the walls, and seem to lean with a smile over the rest of an actor or actress of to-day during an interval.

Upon the wall is Duclos appearing in the picture of the apotheosis of Largillière, in the majesty, pomp and grandeur of queens of the theatre in the old days, an ample display of her naked breast appearing through the costume of

Ariadne, under the crown of stars suspended above her head—a robust lover. Duclos is between Baron and Lekain, and beneath her is to be seen the fine, gentle and meditative head of Molière, painted by Mignard. On the other wall are placed the ewo mantelboards painted by Geoffrey, representing Mlle. Mars surrounded by actors and actresses of the early years of the century; and beyond one of them the head of Talma appears. Upon the other wall, between two windows, stands the old monumental clock which has marked so many hours of sorrow or of triumph, between two columns supporting the white marble busts of Clairon and of Dangeville with at the base two crosspieces, one of which still holds Rachel. On this wall, in the middle of which the mantelpiece bears in the place of a clock a block of white marble surmounted by a bronze bust of Preville, there is on one side the canvas of Ingres representing Louis XIV receiving at his table Molière; there is on the other the archaic picture giving an exact representation of our old theatre, with its candle lighting, and showing in one of their parts all the actors and comedians of the past with Molière in a corner, with his

eyes not in harmony as in all his portraits: this picture was presented by the Bishop of Nancy to the Comédie Française.

In this little museum, to sit beneath the dead the living have large arm-chairs, ample couches of beautiful shapes; they have an eighteenth-century piece of furniture which one day King Louis Philip exchanged for a lustre which he recollected seeing in his youth when with his father, and of which Beauvallet, when in a bad temper, broke a crystal drop every time he entered the green-room.

On winter evenings, beneath these portraits, and upon these comfortable seats in the midst of the drowsy green of the hangings, in the beautiful light of the antique lamps, reflected by the mirrors, with the cheerful flames of the burning logs, which are only burnt there and in the fireplace of the jury-room at the assize court, among the momentary pauses of comediennes dressed in the robes of the royalties of fable and fantasy; on winter evenings this place is warm, softly lighted, and at the same time old enough to be loved, and somewhat fairylike.

La Faustin, after her day in bed, suddenly decided to go out, and in the evening had gone

to pass an hour or two in the green-room of the Comédie Française.

She was wearing her walking-dress, and sat down, with her hat-strings untied, upon the chair in the chimney corner, turning her back upon the old pictures which show Molière and Gautier Garguille as pantaloons. She leant her elbow upon the little roughly-shaped harpsichord which figured in eighteenth-century productions, in the *Barbiere de Séville*, and the comedy of Beaumarchais.

Not desiring to go out, the tragedienne had been driven from her own home by the imperious desire which compels on the morning following a creation the uneasy creator against her will, to go where it is likely to be discussed, to listen to words which indicate attention, gather praise and receive public admiration conveyed, by the mouth of friends.

That evening a great modern piece by an Academician who did not make money, was being played, preceded •by a proverb by Musset which had reached its hundredth performance. There were few people at the theatre, and the green - room was almost deserted.

Three persons only were there: a magistrate who was attached to the place, but disguised his attachment by paying court to all the actresses; an old *littérateur*, a frequenter of the house, who, after warming himself all day in the libraries, came in the evening to the theatre to warm himself; a Prussian savant brought into fashion by the infatuation of our scientific world for Germanic science, and engaged in presenting himself to the world adorned with a red crayat.

"It is nevertheless true," he said to the French litterateur; "I thought that unostentatious work led to something, and I played the piano, like the German I am, in the evening in my attic; but old Hase told me that one could only get here through the women. Where would Champvallier be if he did not go into the drawing-rooms? then I dressed myself in the fashion." Here he cast an approving glance over his person, and then resumed in a tone full of sadness: "Oaly my great misfortune is that I feel I shall never be able to treat the women to the little innuendoes, as you other Frenchmen know how to do. I try hard; first it is too vulgar, then it becomes too nasty, and

then I stop in the middle of my phrase unable to finish it."

From time to time an actor gave a glance of recognition into the green-room, walked over to the tragedienne, and mentioned the theatrical papers which had treated her well in the morning, without adding anything on his own account.

Bressant only, in his fluttering costume as Fantasio, came and sat on the opposite side of the fire-place, and talked to her quite loudly with the warm sympathy of a comrade, of the great dramatic qualities she had displayed the previous evening.

Then the green-room was completely empty. At last a little man known to the tragedienne entered, a dry little man, with a well-cared-for and tended baldness, his skull rendered by particular treatment like a smooth ivory ball, the insupportable type of the dilettante man of the world, an amateur dealer, a successful literary agent, a mentor of strangers of distinction, the perfect bore, in a word, one whose compliment, without his wishing it to be so, was always wounding; but he was tolerated, almost pardoned, by the cowardice of the Parisian when opposed

to a personality whose name is mentioned by the papers at all the famous funerals and at all the first nights.

Advancing towards the tragedienne with a deep bow, he said to her with his head on one side and his two arms at his sides in his most caressing voice—

"Do you know your yesterday's success was quite unexpected by me? Really I did not believe you possessed the requirements of the rôle; but your success must be admitted, since every one agrees upon it, though I must say I place little reliance in public opinion; and I lived in a world which so radically disowned your talent, that I experienced real and very charming astonishment, believe me; but allow me to present to you a stranger who has a great desire to meet our great tragedienne."

He disappeared, and in a few moments introduced to La Faustin a Dutch admiral, who spoke French so little and so badly that it was improbable that he could understand anything but a pantomime by Deburau.

The dilettante man of the world and the Dutch admiral were succeeded by two young attachés at the Embassy, glazed and shining, who armin-arm repeated by turns in an expiring tone: "Divine, divine, divine!"

Then came sincere enthusiasm. It was a celebrated surgeon known by his passion for the theatre who, crossing the green-room like a cannon-ball, said these words to La Faustin in a voice half choked from being out of breath—

"For you I neglected an operation at Bordeaux. Yes, I telegraphed to my patient 'Impossible to-morrow, La Faustin is playing.' You were admirable the whole time."

La Faustin smiled one of her pretty smiles, the delicate raising of a corner of the lip, and said, "No, no, dear sir, I have something which never deceives me; when my talent is good, the best, I listen to myself, I feel pleasure in hearing myself, I enjoy my performance; I am at the same time the actress, and to a small extent my audience. Ah, well, yesterday I sometimes had that feeling, but not always—no; not always."

"Admirable the whole time!" cried the surgeon, running away at the sound of a voice saying, "Just commencing, gentlemen."

Then as the report of La Faustin's presence

spread about the theatre, friends and acquaintances came to see and praise her without making use in their praise of the phrases which tickle vanity. Others came too, and there were fresh visits and new protestations.

Up to the time La Faustin left the greenroom payers of compliments in expansive, burning and grandiloquent admiration succeeded each other.

XIX

ACTORS and actresses of talent do not allow themselves to touch or take part in stupid praise, current compliments, or the vulgar felicitations of their numerous and extensive relations. In order that their vanity may be really touched, they must meet in the admiration shown them an original appreciation, formulated in a happy phrase, and it is necessary for them to be told what they feel to have well played, and to have

a finger placed upon that which they have not rendered in a manner satisfying to themselves. From the inner contempt actors and actresses have for amiable banality is born a confidence, a faith in two or three intimate friends, men of taste, usually disagreeable and grumblers, whose friendship is sometimes obtained in the most curious places, but whose judgment has importance in their eyes and a weight upon their acting, and whose praise alone gives them pleasure.

The day after her visit to the green-room, after breakfast La Faustin went to visit one of her intimate friends, whom she was astonished not to have seen since the performance. She stopped in the Rue Sainte-Appoline at a little house built in the second half of the eighteenth century near the ramparts and promenade, which was in the state of dilapidation of an abandoned house for years without occupiers.

The house, with openings in the lower walls, had no porter, and after ringing for ten minutes, an old servant, of the comic appearance of a lackey in the old comedies, after looking at the visitor through a loophole, opened a little door in the great gateway.

She traversed immense unfurnished chambers, decorated with charming panelling, white panelling black with the dust of half-a-century, all over which could be seen doves carved in the midst of roses—a graceful souvenir left to the wainscot by Mlle. Colombe of the Comédie Italienne, by whom the house had been built. La Faustin was ushered into the room of the old Marquis of Fontebise, who, although it was an hour after midday, was still in bed.

Close to his wig, his teeth were soaking in a bowl upon the table at his bedside; and the old marquis was in bed, his body wrapped in a sheep-skin, a fur cap with ears to it upon his head, and having in front of him a serviette, pinned at the right height to the curtains of the bed.

"How is it I have not seen you, Marquis?"

"Little one, I found you incomplete," he said harshly. "Yes, incomplete; do you understand?" repeated the marquis as he hawked and between each word expectorated upon the serviette fixed at the foot of the bed.

The Marquis of Fontebise was an old gentleman who had been ruined by ladies of the theatre,

and had nothing left but the little house he had purchased with a gallant intention in the latter days of his splendour, and an income so small that he was compelled to have his food at cheap restaurants, and reduced to the service of a man-servant who was willing to accept a girl's wages. He was known as the last survivor of the green-room of the Comédie Française of the days when the inimitable Contat was President, around him being grouped Collin d'Harleville, the Marquis of Ximenes, Andrieux, Picard, Vigée, Alexander Duval, Ducis and Legouvé. Every evening when the Théâtre Français or the Odéon presented a tragedy or comedy from the ancient répertoire, one was sure to meet him at either place. Blessed with the memory of old people of the last century, of the memory which retained everything pertaining to the nobility of D'Hozier, he knew his classics by heart, prompting unwittingly when the prompter was late, and he initiated you into all the metamorphoses, known and unknown, of a part, and he told you how such a gesture produced by chance had brought such a look, such a piece of business not before existing. He was capable, too, of giving you the exact intonation

with which all the celebrated lines had been spoken by illustrious actors and actresses in the last sixty years.

By his own authority he had to some extent made himself the honorary conservator of traditions, which he defended with passion, anger, and vertical taps of his crutch upon the boards, the rage of which was quite amusing in its impotency. Actors consulted him, beginners asked him to listen to them at his house, and he received them in bed, where he spent the day, only rising to dine and go to the theatre.

From the love of actresses the Marquis of Fontebise for many years had passed to the pure and disinterested love of the dramatic art. He had been the first, when La Faustin made her début at a miserable little theatre, to discover her, praise her, introduce her to the journalists, to get her to the Odéon. He had placed at the service of the young girl zeal, activity, persistence and the obstinacy of a professor and relation. The marquis's protection, far from being entirely favourable, had been on the contrary full of hardships, scolding, doubtful compliments, among which turned up every minute or two his favour-

ite expression, "Wooden-head." Sometimes even, when the work of the actress was not quite to his taste, suddenly seized with an access of senile irascibility, he went so far as to throw at his pupil's head anything that came to hand.

The marquis was lying upon his back, with the two ends of the pillow wrapped around his head, and from the bed-clothes, where were his white bristling eyebrows and his despotic aquiline nose, his yellow eyes gazed at the tragedienne with an angry, discontented glance.

La Faustin tried to defend herself in a tone of humble familiarity: "But, Marquis, the part——"

"What are you going to say about the part? Did not you say before of the part of Bajazet, that it got into a passion at once and that annoyed you?"

"Ah, well, I say so again; as for the part of Phædra, admit that it is too many-sided, that no actress in the world has ever been able to give complete satisfaction in this part. It is not my fault, it is the fault of Racine. I had confidence in him, and abandoned myself to his inspiration, but all the time he deceived me. There are

absolutely two women in the part who do not clash."

"You are going to repeat to me—are you not?—the words of the great king, that the part must be played by Champmesle and D'Ennebaut at the same time." He resumed; after spitting: "Come, little one, your 'Tis you who have named to say than in Euripides, there is nothing to seize on in the 'and not I,' but it is cold and very unfeeling!"

"That is true," she said; "I chanced upon the right, true and feeling intonation one day when trying it in a drawing-room, but since then I have never discovered it—never, never, in spite of all I could do," and she added, in a melancholy tone: "There are some things like that which we only say well once in certain dispositions of the soul."

"You have not willed it. The silly women of to-day do not know how to work. Think of the preparatory study of a Lekain for a part when it took nearly six minutes to say four lines; and your methods were poor enough, the way in which you spoke the two lines of the declaration to Hippolytus—

'To develop uncertain embarrassment
My sister had armed you with the fatal thread.**

"Why are those two lines out of place? Why must the gesture be redoubled unseasonably?" cried the tragedienne, rising and traversing the chamber with a certain amount of animation. "Why did he not end afterwards—

'By you would have perished the monster of Crete,' In spite of all detours of his vast retreat'?

Why, after the harmonious final of these two feminine rhymes, come the two masculine rhymes which do not lend themselves to diction? Why did he here forget that the theatrical style must be absolutely designed for pantomime? That is a fault Racine has committed here, the only one I know; as for those two lines, you can say what you like, Marquis, those two lines do not encourage gesture."

"Be quiet, or I will throw my wig at your head," shouted the marquis, writhing under his sheepskin. "Criticize the masters, you who are stupid—do you hear?—sometimes a fool of unwitting genius, but still a fool, a 'woodenhead' all the rest of the time!"

"Come, Marquis, you are to-day in your worst humour; good-bye, I am going. Till another day."

"Listen, little one," replied the old man, turning to her a soft, paternal look; "the marquis is not satisfied. The whole time you lacked the epic flame of grand passions, though, after all, berhaps that flame is dead. Everything is so yulgar now. You others, don't you join a gentleman and live in a most conjugal manner in the company of some one? Ah, with the actresses of my day, the life of their heart was more accidental. It is very certain, at any rate, that, listening to you, one is not set on fire for a moment, and Phædra played like that is not Phædra at all."

Here the old man paused, his eyes half shut, as if sleepy, while La Faustin, thinking him asleep, got up to go.

"Ah, little one, will you take my advice?" said the marquis, after spitting upon the serviette, at the moment the tragedienne was about to close the door of the chamber. "Be quick and find a wretch of a lover who beats you and loves you: that will perhaps give you the heart of the rôle."

Then La Faustin recrossed the large empty chambers, followed by the decrepit valet, and her face was like that of a little scolded girl, on which the singular advice of the old lover of dramatic art caused a smile to appear.

XX

IT was three o'clock. La Faustin, who was to play Phædra in the evening for the second time, had just entered her bath.

The actress's bath-room, the porcelain chamber, as Guenegaud called it, was the only room she had not given up to Blancheron's upholsterer, and which she amused herself by arranging according to her personal taste with an extravagance the idea of which had not extended to the rest of the house. She, a woman who, passing an hour every day in the water, said that in the inert idleness of the

bath it was necessary to distract the eyes by something pretty on the wall. She had executed by Bracquemond, the ingenious decorator, twenty-four large earthenware plates, which entirely covered the walls with a panelling of porcelain.

The artist had placed upon the smooth panels birds rising from the waves, rivers and lakes, with moist banks, in the midst of foliage and the gleaming flight of bright-coloured birds, which crossed like a flash a bright enamel verdure standing out from it white and cloudy.

Upon the floor of the room, a sample of the artist's charming imagination, he had sought to imitate the laughing branches hiding the earth beneath the flowering trees after a high wind; and the little tiles of the floor appeared to be profusely sown with the white petals of cherry blossom and the red petals of the Japanese quince tree.

For seats there were stools of Chinese porcelain. ${\color{red}\sigma}$

The ceiling was very original. In the centre there was a rose window of glass, the joining of which was concealed under carved wood, which by daylight represented the roof of a kiosk, and upon the sky colour glass, as a novelty, were painted flowers as in the Italian drawing-rooms of the seventeenth century. These paintings had been done by a decorator of the period who was unique, but gave way, to absinthe. La Faustin only got them by keeping the man a prisoner at her house for a month. The rose window of the ceiling had as a border a large square frame, with deep angles formed by stratifications of Baccarat crystal, the undulating reliefs of which, and the multiple facets, gave the dancing light of a mirror of larks

In the midst of the room stood an immense copper brazier, gleaming like gold, and in which was growing white lilac, a little tree which La Faustin had renewed all the winter and spring as soon as the flowers faded.

La Faustin was in the water for three-quarters of an hour, dreaming and thinking with the diffuse and liquefied thoughts which a long bathe brings, of her morning's visit to the Marquis de Fontebise. She had had applause, recalls and the ovation at the end of the previous evening's performance, and yet she was only half satisfied with herself; it seemed to her that she had

not given all she had promised in taking the part. Yes, she had played with all the resources of her talent; but was all possible talent enough for the part? And without knowing why, there came into her ears, in an almost teasing way, a cry uttered in a bad piece by a boulevard consumptive whose part was taken by a poor enough actress, but one who was a consumptive.

In the midst of the actress's dream Guene-gaud entered and gave her mistress a card, saying that the bearer of the card was below, and would be glad to know the day and hour that she would do him the honour to receive him.

La Faustin read the card, which bore the name—

LORD ANNANDALE.

"Lord Annandale," she said; "I don't know him at all."

"Madam does not know the gentleman who gave me this cardy why, it is Mr. William Rayne!"

"William Rayne, you say—William Rayne. Now I recollect, Annandale was his father's name; ah, well, admit him at once." "Madam, without doubt, forgets where she is!"

"I tell you to bring him here!"

With a hand shaking with emotion, La Faustin took up a flagon from the table, and emptied it into the bath, and when Lord Annandale entered, the body of the naked woman was nothing but an appearance of pink, almost invisible in a milky opal whiteness, which veiled and clothed her nakedness with a cloud.

The young lord, who was in deep mourning, advanced respectfully towards the bather, and on reaching her, knelt down upon one knee to kiss the moist hand La Faustin stretched out to him, as if he were almost afraid in the presence of an apparition.

"Yes, it is I; many things have taken place in my life. I will tell you of them some day; but I have read all your letters, and I know that you still love me, Juliette."

"Is it possible it is you, William?" and La Faustin cut short her reply, and did nothing but gaze at him to assure herself of his existence, of his real presence, with an almost frantic expression of face. When he wished to speak, putting her hand with a vague gesture over

his, she said, "No, no, do not speak to me; when you speak to me your words occupy my attention, and the sound of your voice distracts me, and all I want to do is to look at you."

Guenegaud returned. "Good God! M. Blancheron wishes to speak to you, and insists upon coming up."

Over the young woman's face a cloud passed, like the bad temper of an awakening, after which she said, "Tell Blancheron that I cannot receive him; that I am with a gentleman!"

Seeing Guenegaud's hesitation at delivering the message, La Faustin added in an imperious voice, "Tell him that I command you!"

Guenegaud went out, and the bather signalled with her eyes to William to come and sit upon a porcelain stool by the side of the bath. With her arms in a shamefaced way upon her breast, and her dark hair against William's blonde hair, with a caressing nod of the head, with tender and troubled words, divided by periods of silence, she displayed all the happiness of the lover, who becomes suddenly silent as she turns her face away from the man she loves. William, leaning

over Juliette's half-turned face, saw the tears silently running down her cheeks, tears of happiness, which the upturned corners of her smiling lips drank in.

"Oh, but this is most extraordinary happiness, and yet one would think I was crying," said La Faustin, passing the back of her hand over her eyes. "Four o'clock already! William, we must go. Come and see me at the theatre this evening. Guenegaud will give you the pass for the little box with the grill. Quick, go away!"

As William was going through the door, the tragedienne, with her arms and throat out of the water, threw him a kiss, and said, "My lord, this evening La Faustin will play to you, to you alone; you understand!"

XXI

WHEN La Faustin reached the theatre she found a long queue already formed along the façade in the Rue de Richelieu round the angle of the arcades, and terminated in the little Rue de Montpensier—a howling and gesticulating mob, out of which rose the sound of passionate words.

Paris was smitten with ardent curiosity about the second performance following the discussion aroused by the first; some placed the new tragedienne above Rachel, others only recognized in her moderate intelligence served by very distinguished organs, a marvellous instrument upon which, the old Marquis of Fontebise played, an actress of art, but not an actress of sentiment. For two days she had been the subject of discussion and conversation in the cafés, drawing-rooms and clubs. Then concerning this first appearance, there had begun in the papers a battle upon the question as to whether it was orthodox to galvanize the

dead tragedy by means of the effects of modern drama in the fashion in which the deserter from the Odéon had the intelligence to play it. The whole of Paris had made a rendezvous that evening at the Théâtre Français as a last resource to judge the artist.

La Faustin went to her dressing-room and began to rehearse her part with impatience, looking every few minutes at the watch upon the toilet-table and listening to the far-away hum of the theatre as it filled, the sound of which reached her like the liquid roaring of the rising waves of an inundation.

Contrary to her habits the tragedienne, before the three knocks, was upon the stage with her eye to the hole in the curtain. Her glance, indifferent as it was at the house full of the fashionable world, at the severity of the old faces in the orchestra, at the tumultuous public, enthusiastic with her beforehand in the whole of the house, her piercing glance only looked for a silhouette in the shadow and behind the trellis-work of a box with a grill.

During the last few minutes before the performance, while she gazed long at the dark square, in which she was now sure there was some one, a sort of tender physical weakness, a sweet inclination to faint made her ready to fall and caused her to support herself for a moment by her little finger in the hole in the curtain.

When on the rise of the curtain the actress had to say—

"Let us go no further, but remain, dear Œnone; I can bear up no longer; my strength faileth me."

La Faustin murmured these lines with the abandon of a body going into a swoon of love, using those liquid notes of the voice which in a theatre make the people who love look to their eyes. The words of Racine no longer told the audience of the love of the wife of Theseus, but told of the love of Juliette for William, and in the shade of the forests of Greece she spoke to him of the shade of the woods of Scotland; and her words of love were so obviously addressed to the little dark box that every moment heads turned from the orchestra, heads leaned over the balcony, jealously searching that shadowy corner which contained an unknown man whose face could not be seen.

William went to compliment the actress in her

dressing-room after the first act. She sent him away, saying to him, "Don't come back; I don't wish to see you in the midst of these indifferent people. You will wait for me in my carriage after the performance."

In the second act, in the declaration of love La Faustin's voice failed her in the emotion of her passion; but the audience only saw in the dying away of the actress's accents the spasm of a soul exhausted with sentiment, and never, perhaps, did the famous speech produce so powerful an effect upon the spectators.

During this act and the others she still and always played her part to William, just like the modulation of an eternal declaration in all the tones of passion; to William went all the softening, transport, heart-shocks and the satisfaction of the artist in the success of a line gushing out with the affection of the whole of her being.

Of the applause, shouts and delirium of a house moved to its very fibres by the sincere play of a real passion the tragedienne heard, saw and perceived nothing. All for one only, for La Faustin there was neither orchestra, boxes, gallery, amphitheatre nor pit; there existed only

two hands gloved in white upon a half-shut grill.

As she had promised Lord Annandale, La Faustin played for him, for him alone, giving her lover the greatest pride and satisfaction which an actress's love can give a man, the loving offering of her talent in the presence of and with disdain for the two thousand people for whom she is acting, and who are to her as if they do not exist.

The performance continued amid the increasing admiration of all, and at the same time to the surprise and astonishment of those who had been present at the first night. It was no longer the somewhat savagely sensual Phædra of the previous evening, the Phædra of Euripides; it was the Phædra of Racine, the languishing Phædra like the cooing of the wounded dove.

XXII

"RAVAUD, home slowly," La Faustin told her coachman. La Faustin sat by the side of William, with the rustle which the silk of a happy woman's dress makes; and both of them in the fulness of their happiness remained silent. They tasted the idle pleasure which at night takes possession of a pair of lovers in a small carriage, the tender and insinuating emotion passing from one to the other, a kind of soft magnetic penetration of their two bodies, and of their two minds, in languid contemplation and in warm contact. It is like a physical and spiritual intimacy, in a kind of half-tint, in which the fugitive lights of the lamps in the doorways which they pass play in the shadow with the woman, dispute for the right to shine upon her cheek, her forchead, or a part of her toilette, or to display for an instant her face and the soft violet light of her eyes. Then, again, the rocking of the carriage to which body and mind keep time, throws with a jerk a willing head

upon a shoulder waiting to receive it. Without a single word of love the two lovers kept time to the gentle trot of the carriage, William holding Juliette's hand between his own, while he mechanically felt the fine grasping fingers, the fine, smooth, warm, moist skin and that soft palm, from which it seemed to him that a little of the life of the woman he loved was transmitted to him.

XXIII

REACHING the first floor of the house in the Rue Godot de Maurov, as William stopped the tragedienne said to him, "Higher, higher, friend, we will sup to-day in the cabin."

"What of the people madam has invited this evening?" cried Guenegaud in a voice of despair through the half-open door of the dining-room.

"Ah, well, let them sup without me! You

must tell them that I have started for Harve, and that I desired to see the storm predicted for to-night."

Preceding her lover, La Faustin made him go up to the top storey and took him into a room with a parquet floor, a wainscot, and a ceiling of varnished deal, in which was a young girl's bed with white muslin curtains.

"This is my little corner, where I am let alone to rehearse, to study my part; and this bed is the bed in which a country friend of mine sleeps when she comes to see me."

Before the fire-place, in which a bright wood fire was burning, was a little table with prawns, a cold partridge, a basket of Fontainebleau grapes between two pomegranates, and a bottle of champagne upon it—the supper of a student and his girl.

"Amongst it all," cried William, "I have not yet told you that to-day you were the greatest actress in the world!"

"To-day let us only speak of our love," said La Faustin; "but wait a minute," and she disappeared into a dressing-room.

William sat down by the side of the fire, looking at the little room, from which in the

increasing warmth a healthy odour of resin arose; and before the pure bed with its white curtains he experienced a feeling of ease and relief, arising from the fact that he was not in the chamber sacred to the love of La Faustin and her protector.

La Faustin reappeared in a few minutes wearing a dressing-gown and a lace kerchief, which Lord Annandale recognized as being those which Juliette wore in Scotland upon those nights when both, seated upon the steps of the castle, forgot everything as they looked at the white peacocks in the moonlight.

"Oh yes, I kept them!" said La Faustin, as she freed herself from the arms which William stretched out to embrace her.

She added, "Presently; be reasonable. I am going to wait upon you, my lord."

The two lovers sitting at the little table without servants to wait upon them began this supper with the touching of their hands; and as they passed the things, the foolishness of sentiment in full liberty for everything, or nothing, the gaiety of an extemporized meal, and the fresh emotion of this passionate tête-à-tête in the attic, made it like youth's first love feast.

They looked at one another and smiled as they ate.

From time to time during this love feast La Faustin let fall the fork she had raised to her mouth, and after a minute's contemplation, which resembled a picture of religious transport, murmured with something of a man's admiration for a woman and a deep sighing breath, "You are very good looking, my hand-some lord!"

He was indeed handsome, as La Faustin said, with his gentle, melancholy, tender blue eyes, the silky curls of his hair and beard, the clearness of skin only found in the English, and his slender waist, frail and nervous—one of the best-looking of the aristocracy of the handsome blonde races.

It was a curious and charming spectacle, that of the constraint, embarrassment and happy confusion of the man before the woman's courtship—the woman who an hour before had been applauded by the whole of Paris.

Her stranger lover had no word to say to reply to her attentions, to the graces embroidering the seriousness of this pretty French love. The supper was over, and as William had some difficulty in lighting a cigarette, Juliette took it from his hands, lit it, took a puff at it, and put it in his mouth.

"Now, my handsome lord, your adventures, all your adventures, since we separated."

William then told her that his father, fearing his love for her, had made him resign his place at the Belgian Legation, obtained him the post of first private secretary to the Viceroy of India, and that all this had taken place in the space of a few weeks, by means of the authority which, in the aristocratic families in England, a father exercises over his son-He had written to Juliette, but a servant who was devoted to his father had intercepted the letter. Then he started in despair, and spent there years which seemed eternal in length.

- "And the black tiger?"
- "But how do you know? Oh, that was only an insignificant wound, a bad scratch, exaggerated by the newspapers."

"Let me see the place, show it to me," and La Faustin's fingers began mechanically to ascend one of his shirt-sleeves. "How childish you are!"

Lord Annandale resumed: "At last, at the end of three years, news came of my father's death. I returned to England, and found all your letters in a scaled packet to be sent to me; it was the time the papers were full of your début at the Comédie Française. The business of my inheritance kept me in England, and I could not get to Paris till the day after your first performance."

Then the woman sank down upon the carpet at his feet, and as she crouched by his side, with her crossed arms resting upon her thighs, she said to him, eye to eye, "But I want you to speak of the women there!"

"The Bayaderes!" said Lord Annandale in a tone of ironical admiration. "Oh, they are very gentle little creatures, with the faces of crafty little girls; the patter of their naked little feet, the coloured gauze which clothes them in transparency, their drawers of clinging silk, their hands covered with rings and full of mirrors, their gilded foreheads, and their noses jangling with jewellery, are the principal points about them."

"Yes, yes, but in spite of their noses, I am

sure, my handsome lord, that you loved very much in that country."

"Loved there! No, Juliette," said the Englishman simply; "it was your portrait that I loved, forgotten though I believed myself by you!"

Juliette raised herself with a jerk of the hips from the carpet, and falling back upon William's knees, with her arms behind her, brought to her mouth her lover's lips, and said to him in a rapid kiss, "Come!"

XXIV

THE two lovers were taking breakfast seated at the little table at which they had supped, when Guenegaud catered and gave to La Faustin a letter with a Paris suburban postmark.

La Faustin opened the letter, read it, and with wide-open eyes cried, "Ah! I am easy in

my mind at last," and passed the letter to William with a grave gesture.

Here is the letter—

" Evening, Viroflay Station.

"JULIETTE, .

"To kill Lord Annandale would not be the way to recover you, would it? Ah, well, since there is no longer any Juliette for me, I am going to kill myself! But I do not desire that the odium of my death can fall upon you, and when you receive this letter I shall have been cut in two in a fall from a railway carriage between two trains travelling in opposite directions. Be easy in your mind; I have studied the question, and you know I am a practical man. It will therefore be a natural death very well done, which will not concern you. Oh, don't be afraid of reproaches from me, Juliette! I have had an infancy of poverty, a youth of ugliness and vulgarity, and in the hell of business my only pleasant years, and those which render life without you impossible, I owe to you, and I thank you for them. In the whole of my existence I have loved you and you alone, and I have only been a poor dog

who fawned upon you, and whom you took pleasure in caressing. You are too proud to accept my estate, whatever it may be, but you will not refuse the legacy of Dick; and as I die it will be very pleasant to me to think when I am gone that the animal loved by both of us will be sometimes upon your knees.

"Adieu.

"Blancheron."

William's glante went from the suicide's letter to La Faustin's face, for he had a sort of fear of the little root which an old love leaves in the heart of a woman who loves again.

"This man loved you indeed, madam," said Lord Annandale, with a note of tenderness. "We must send and look for his dog."

XXV

A FEW days, later, preceded by the porter, Lord Annandale and La Faustin visited one of the large houses in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which was for sale.

Through the reception-rooms the young lord walked in front, hardly looking, with that British reserve which devotes to externals but slight attention in a bored and distraught way. The porter's comments upon the height of the ceilings, the quality of the pictures, the finish of the carved wainscot, only caused the visitor to slightly raise his eyelids.

They went on to visit the first floor. The shutters were closed. Pushing open one of them, the porter started a frightened bird from the branch of a large tree quite near the window.

"Bird," said Lord Annandale, with a finger in the air, and a look of surprise and pleasure on his face, which suddenly lit up.

Then the Englishman resumed his attitude of

phlegmatic indifference, much to the porter's discouragement.

On coming down-stairs again the poor man, risked saying, "Excuse me, I have forgotten to show monsieur and madam this room," and he took them into a little hall where there was a large bath of very common marble.

"Bath," said Lord Annandale, as if he were mildly astonished at a fortunate meeting with an unexpected object. Then he remained, his hands clasped in front of him, contemplating it with a smile.

When he raised his eyes he saw La Faustin in the corridor walking as if she were fleeing from something, and her back agitated by strange little shocks.

He rejoined her somewhat disturbed. "What is the matter, Juliette?"

La Faustin, with her handkerchief to her mouth trying to suppress a desire to laugh loudly, said to him, at the same time giving him a terrible dig with one of her elbows, "Don't say anything now—later on."

There remained only the stables to be seen. The porter, induced to speak by the good impression the bath-room had produced upon the visitor, opened his mouth to state the number of boxes, etc., but his voice failed him before the look of contempt which spread over the English lord's face. The look which the Condé, who constructed the stables at Chantilly, would have given a poor man's stable of his day, was like the glance Lord Annandale cast upon these stables. He contented himself with a glance to right and left through the half-open door, and disappeared, leaving the porter cap in hand stunned by his originality.

"Oh, my dear, let me laugh," said La Faustin in the carriage, as she settled herself to make room for her lover; "it is too much for me. I shall be ill. Bird!" and she imitated Lord Annandale's gesture when the bird flew away. "Bath!" and she mimicked the way he looked at the bath. "Those are the only two words you spoke during the visit. Ah, really you were very funny. To think that in all you saw there those were the only two things you paid any attention to! And it is because of the bird and the bath that you are going to buy the house, is it not?"

Losing her seriousness, which she had almost recovered, and leaning back in the carriage, the actress's face, framed in a pretty little round hat, a sort of feathered rainbow made of a peacock's tail, was one big laugh, a regular schoolboy roar.

· Her lover was at first a little disconcerted, but after a minute began to laugh like his mistress, and finished up by saying with a very good grace—

"Yes, it is true, my dear, the English are a little undemonstrative. What would you have? Then you don't know that in the purchase of a house, even in a town, we cannot endure it without trees and grass, and the bird told me suddenly that they were there. As for the bathroom, that appealed to our national mania for washing; but perhaps I appeared a little too astonished at finding the facility for bathing in a French house. But now it is not a question of the bath and the bird, and as you have finished laughing, would you care to live in that house?"

"Why, I should be very difficult to please if I did not. It is one of the most beautiful houses in Paris."

"I find it very suitable too; but the particular reason that would make me buy it is that there

is plenty of ground and that the stables could be doubled. Another thing pleased me too: as I wish to have a hall-porter as in London, the steps are very large, so he could have a box there. Then the house pleases you, and you are ready to move in to-morrow."

"To-morrow! You know that in France there are formalities on the sale of property which take up a certain time."

"The house is to let or for sale, is it not? I am going to rent it and purchase it. My lawyer will see to that."

XXVI

A MONTH had not passed before the loving couple found themselves settled in the house as if they had been there years. It had been restored, repaired and refashioned to suit the habits of London life, and peopled by the numerous servants comprising an English household.

There was in the verandah, which had been newly erected upon the top of the front steps of the house, the inside porter, whose only duty was to touch electric bells communicating with the servants' offices, the kitchens and vestibule.

In the ante-chamber, before a little table upon which a writing-desk and silver tray for carrying the letters were placed, the footman sat in one of those great arm-chairs with immense cushions in which he originally used to await his master's return from late sittings of the House of Lords. Upon a table was always placed the master's hat, displaying its white lining in the midst of shining brushes, and by its side the cane and pair of ready-stretched gloves, looking like the cast of a dead man's hands.

There was, by the side of the ante-chamber, the parlour, a severe room with nothing upon its walls, set apart for the reception of those not considered the equals of the master—merchants, lawyers, doctors and veterinary surgeons.

For waiting at table there was quite an army of servants with special attributes under the command of the butler, who was a sort of major-domo and custodian of the keys of the cellar, but merely gave orders, and did not wear a livery.

There was the steward, who looked after all financial matters among the servants, and was a kind of subordinate secretary.

Then there was the valet, a servant of long standing, and one who was only changed after grave internal changes. He was a servant speaking two or three languages, always Italian and German, and sometimes French, and the man entrusted with all confidential missions, acting as courier when travelling, and charged with making sure that there were baths at the hotels where they stopped.

There was the boy, a boy of sixteen, performing the duties of a kind of page for La Faustin, and entrusted with the execution of elegant commissions.

There was, too, a whole host of females under the orders of the housekeeper, the matron in black, a needlewoman, a second housemaid to assist Guenegaud, and a swarm of chambermaids with little white caps, whose duties were to look after the bedrooms. In the kitchen half-a-dozen more robust creatures with fine white arms bustled about.

Last of all, there was the stable, built absolutely apart, with its head groom, who was a person of power, entrusted with the purchase of horses and the maintenance of discipline, and had a horse and carriage for his own use; then there was the coachman, who lived with his wife and family away from the house, and whose duties consisted of driving the master of the house only, and then returning with closed windows after the master had alighted; then there was the mistress's coachman, who drove no one but her; and besides these three dignitaries there were quite a crowd of stablemen, with Scotch caps, and vests with lining sleeves, who were always whistling, and invisible to the whole of the household, from the master to the least of the servants.

The porter had been selected from the tallest men.

The footman of the ante-chamber was selected from among the boys with the prettiest faces.

The head groom had been chosen from among the bipeds endowed with the most bandy legs.

There was a whole troop of servants of whom each was a specialist, as the pipe-bearer is in India, like an automatic and rigid priest of a cult full of rites, in which the change of glasses and plates at table resembles the celebration of a mystery; they were a band of servants who brought to their aid silence, formal gravity and the cold solemnity of an etiquette like that which surrounded the retiring to rest of Louis XIV, the ceremony of the presentation of the royal night-shirt.

The change of life from her plebeian existence to this place and gorgeous aristocratic existence did not cause La Faustin either a transport of dazzling vanity or even great joy. In the tragedienne the habits of the theatre as well as a little of the Paris street urchin existed, and she seemed rather disposed to mock at Fortune's great favours than to be astonished at them. The woman was amused at it as by a prodigious change of scene, by a joyful novelty and a farcical revolution. She seemed, in her own words, to be living in a very amusing farce.

XXVII

THEN the two lovers displayed their affection in the Bois and on the racecourse in a conspicuous turn-out; they showed themselves in the stage-boxes at the first performances at all the theatres, at balls and benefit performances; they were a little ostentatious at all the expensive haunts of pleasure, and were surrounded by the murmurs of jealous curiosity, which arose in multitudes around their happy love.

This publicity they gave to their love was quite external, for when they returned to the house their life became a tête-à-tête. In London, a man who has an illicit liaison does not receive his friends in the house of his mistress, or appear in public with her. This man, through living in France, had become quite a "Continental," and was bold enough to go out with the woman he loved, but retained, from the customs of his country, a certain amount of objection to introducing his friends and relations into a home which was not that of a wedded wife. Lord

Annandale, therefore, did not receive his friends, and the whole staff of the mansion hovered, round in the vast dining-room the woman and man sitting alone at table. The door of the mansion hardly opened except after breakfast, at that hour at which in England the master of the house does the honours of his stables. Then La Faustin's lover could not resist the desire to show his English horses to his fellow-countrymen, and the pleasure of saying something uncomplimentary about the French horses "the horses always up in the air."

XXVIII

THE life of the man and woman was a tite-à-tite from morning to night, which continued when they were out in the world together. In it the woman who loved did not find a moment's weariness, and this man of a strange race was the whole time intoxicated by the

flavour of body and mind of Paris's great courtesan, the most perfect giver of the pleasure of love upon earth.

XXIX

LA FAUSTIN was of middle height, rather petite than big, and very elegant in her slim and slender person. It was one of those deceptive appearances of thinness, in which the throat, as the eighteenth-century phrase says, could fill the two hands of an honest man, the thighs were those of a fat woman, and the rest of the body had preserved the delicate juvenile modelling of that of a young girl. She possessed and this is a charming physical distinction fast disappearing—pretty drooping shoulders, and when she was in evening dress there could be seen, in the graceful curve of her back, near the shoulders, two little laughing dimples. The animated pallor of her skin, and almost im-

perceptible colour in her face upon her bust and limbs became the dull white of brunettes when their skin is white, the warm, bloodlike white painted by Titian upon his mistress's breast. Her hair, a dark auburn, waved upon her blue-veined temples, and she had a luminous forehead marked with protuberances of intelligence, a little intelligent nose with nothing tragic about it, and a mouth with mocking corners, gentle and ironical, which sometimes remained half open in the set smile of a statue. The whole was a collection of irregular features, very modern and very Parisian, but the design of which disappeared in the play of the features, in the enchanting fascination of the woman's eves.

La Faustin had grey eyes, or rather, they were of an indefinable shade—eyes of the colour of a wave having within it the darkness or transparency which the passing of a shaft of light causes in the water of the sea. Her eyes were at the same time clear and obscure. Bad temper made them black and almost wicked, and joy, sympathy and love made them blue and very gentle.

La Faustin looked like that, and had a figure

which, with her distinguished dress and harmonious gestures, quivered with something of the strenuous life which, even in repose, is preserved in the body of the rope-dancer.

XXX

THE woman's particular charm, however, was the originality of her nature. She pleased and ravished by the unexpectedness of her femininity. From contact with things and people she received particular impressions, the expression of which took place in an unusual way, quite different from that of other women. She saw, felt and loved in a very personal way. Among women of birth and those of common education, the feminine being, from great to small, from top to bottom is always, so to speak, the same being, and the sensitiveness of both seems built upon the same model. Under the action of external influences, the well-educated woman or the

badly-educated woman has a dislike to tenderness, commiseration, even attacks of nerves, which seem to have been foreseen and described in a programme drawn up for the entire class. With all of them the first movements of the soul are second movements, corrected, amended and rendered healthy, and with all, save the little shades occasioned by temperament or exceptional nervousness, everything takes place under the despotism of a certain respectability, attenuating and effacing the personality. These women, even the most intelligent of them, have ideas made in advance upon everything in the world. They dare show nothing externally of the rebellions and insurrections in their heads. or anything that would appear singular, abnormal or eccentric. Thus fashioned by education, curbed in the production of their sensations and thoughts, these women are desperately uniform, and bring to the rich and bored of the old civilizations, to their husbands and lovers, nothing which will revolutionize their apathy, give it a shock, amusement or violent distraction. That is the explanation of many of the liaisons of aristocrats with low-born women.

La Faustin had, on the contrary, that bitter savour of her class. A creature of the people, she had remained, in their coarse food she still delighted, and in the midst of them she delighted to be at the fireworks, popular fêtes and fairs in the neighbourhood of Paris. Coming from this stock, she had retained the less disciplined movements of the soul, the impressions nearer to nature and more external the high spirits, strength, and gaiety of the poor devil with a happy existence, a life with a beating pulse, agitating, moving, and stormy, which was not the unhealthy driving of the woman of the world, but had about it a little of the hot and rushing blood of youth; such a living life she had that her company had an influence upon others, making them talkative and clever.

If, like every woman, she had sometimes very violent attacks of nerves, they were of short duration.

But as well as being a creature of the people, and remaining so in some particulars, La Faustin was at the same time by election a creature of the aristocracy. This she suddenly showed by her superior unlearned elegance of mind and body, discovered in some marvellous

way by an intuition which is not always found in people born in the midst of elegance. From a prank she turned to a gentle laugh, from a vulgar joke to a gentle caress, from daring vivacity to the height of good taste, atoning for a vulgar word or taste by a grace, elegance and refinement all her own, and if she took a fancy at her sister's to a cup of cocoa, she drank it from a Venetian cup. At all hours of the day and night she showed herself to be a diverse and many-sided being, in whom the grisette alternated with the duchess time after time.

There were in her transformations and metamorphoses, subtle changes, in which the woman, so to speak, renewed herself and made herself loved always in a different shape. She had, too, follies and unexpected tricks of sensibility and of irony, cleverly laughing at herself, ingenious inventions in the delicacy of love, original thoughts, quite new words, and an extraordinary succession of rapid and fleeting sensations which were as freely expressed as they were experienced. All that she mingled with a little girl's ignorance, confessed with such charming ingenuousness that it made one desire to kiss her.

One day, when La Faustin was writing a letter to her manager under William's eyes, as he looked over her shoulder, he pointed out to her two or three spelling errors, and begged her to start again. Instead of doing so, she turned to him, and in a tone roguish and adorable, said, "No, I shall send it just as it is, it is more natural!"

The woman who wrote so badly, like a woman of the past century, expressed herself divinely, and no one in the world could put so much charm into a welcome as she, carrying away people and making them her own by a pretty and imperious command issuing from the graces of her body.

XXXI

LA FAUSTIN had besides a particularly seductive way with the men who enjoyed her intimate society; she possessed the tact of a

female artist which made her find a merit, charm and distinction in men of which they ware often themselves ignorant, and as grateful for the discovery as if they had been really dowered by her with the merit, charm and distinction. She was endowed with a delicate perception which went straight to the hidden quality, to the rare peculiarity, to the hidden beauty which every individual conceals, to those captivating nothings which are very often the secret atoms of love. There was a vibration of the voice, a character of the smile, a beauty of the hand, a fashioning of some part of the being, which the friend or lover threw suddenly into relief. Upon the discovery of a pleasing physical or mental detail in those she loved, La Faustin animated. developed it with enthusiasm, as one enthuses over a picture or a statue, and this admiration became in her mouth a theme of little soothing phrases, with everything entering and penetrating like the caresses of the voice of a semiintoxicated woman who says nothing stupid, but thoroughly exposes a man's vanity. Her elegance in very little things sometimes went so far, that she was capable on one of her enthusiastic days of persuading some one at her table,

easily influenced by a salad of truffles, that he was an exceptionally gifted man.

The sway which La Faustin exercised over men by her amiable flattery she owed to the sincerity and freedom of her admiration, into which neither premeditation, craft nor calculation entered, but which was the spontaneous and natural expansion of a kind of love for the charming, distinguished and successful in mankind, and which in the woman expressed itself in exaltation and enthusiasm.

XXXII

In the last century an Englishman loved a French courtesan with the passionate tenderness which one soft summer night found this pretty, loving phrase, "Don't look at it so much, my darling, for I cannot give it you!"—referring to a star at which his mistress was looking.

It might have been said that there was in

Lord Annandale's love a little of this passion of former days, and that in this modern attachment there was revived something of the dear union of the eighteenth-century lovers, and of the bewitchment of Lord Albemarle by Lolotte.

In the peace of the great house, in the midst of the odour of dying flowers, the falling of whose leaves upon the marble tables marked the insensible lapse of time, the two sat side by side, the fingers of their hands clasped together for hours, filled with the happy trifles of adoration and living in a state of happiness in which talking seemed an effort.

Gentle pressures, the exchange of lazy smiles, and a tranquil pleasure of the heart, formed a mute happiness, whence after a long time the man's gratitude, which he did not know how to display, rose to his lips in this question, put in a solicitous voice: "Do you desire anything, Juliette?"

" No."

Silence returned in the more odorous scent of the flowers, in the nearer approach of their bodies, in the more languid expression of smiles and glances; it was a silence broken only after a long interval by a new question, which in different words was still the same: "Do you want anything, Juliette?"

"No.'

The man's two questions and the two "Noes" of the woman was the whole of the dialogue of their love.

XXXIII

ENGLISH love is not talkative, loquacious or eloquent; it does not show itself in words, charming conversation, babbling phrases nor little caressing names. Puritanism drove from the language the pretty couplets of Romeo and Juliet, the gallant phraseology of the Catholic centuries; and the protestant Anglo-Saxon has only the words to express his flame with which he addresses the prostitutes in the Strand, the words which exceed in vulgarity the vulgar expressions of all the people in the

universe, even the language of Tennyson, reserved for the austere love of the British home, is half mystic and half commonplace. The Englishman has no love vocabulary. When he meets one in France his severe education and habit make him use terms, words and graces somewhat emasculated, childish and minstrel-like; at the same time the "Swift" irony is always hidden away in every Englishman.

The Englishman still disdains the useless word, and with a modesty that has a touch of distinction his love is not overburdened with verbiage. In his relations with the French courtesan he is more reticent than the Frenchman, giving up less of himself to his mistress, communicating to her, so to speak, nothing of his thoughts, his emotions. He is shut up within himself. But the Englishman redeems this want of conversation and expansion by an air of deference, an admiration that is touching in its simplicity, by youthful submission to his. first conquest, and by a tone of great politeness such as might have been used by the lords of old in any traffic with the impure; lastly, by the little things of no account that appeal to

the fallen woman and her most secret vanities. Thus La Faustin had desired Lord Annandale never to use "thee" and "thou" to her in public, regarding this as the language of the bedroom. Now with the Englishman, who, even in the midst of a living, loving affair of the heart, always has a slight touch of contempt that he can scarcely ever dissimulate for the woman who is not a lawful wife, there has happened something particular and peculiar to the English with regard to women placed in the position of La Faustin. The great dancers, singers and actresses are considered by the nobility of Great Britain as a superior species of humanity, a feminine world beyond the world of usual venal love; they are accepted by society as ladies, and they are received in the big houses with all the pomp of the high-born. Therefore the passion for them possesses or acquires a special character.

It partakes of the divinity of gallantry, physical and ideal love, with the kiss-hand grace of a minuet. Only the Englishman, behind his vizard of cold spirituality, being by nature very libertine, it happens very often in these erotico-sentimental affairs that, without

injuring the least in the world the lover's passion for the one conjugally adored, some fantasy of passion enters the brain and he goes where temptation is. Lord Annandale imitated his fellow-countrymen.

XXXIV

ONE day La Faustin, in the long interval before the entrance upon the scene of Phædra in the fifth act, was in her room at the theatre. In those days the rooms of the Théâtre Français were very plain. A couch, some chairs, photographs, perhaps a plaster bust, was all they contained. The time had not yet come for the boudoir to be like a cabinet of curiosities, as is the room of Mlle. Croizotte with its sumptuous hangings, that of Mlle. Lloyd with its Chinese plates, or that of Mlle. Samary with its ceiling of Japanese fans. La Faustin commenced this revolution in the rooms of the Théâtre Français,

aided by the friendly help of little Luzy, who was a great buyer and judge of antiquities.

Upon this evening the little saloon was full. Lord Annandale, who passed the evenings when La Faustin played either in the hall or her room, was seated near the fire. The friends who came were so numerous that as a fresh visitor arrived some one had to leave. The favourite seat, near that of La Faustin, had a succession of occupants, who could only stay some moments.

In this room the woman was no longer the woman of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré and elsewhere, whose smile and love-looks were for her beloved only. Here there was the general coquetry the actress has for all. Her eyes were involuntarily provocative, her smile had somewhat of an aphrodisiac promise, her friendly gestures seemed to convey tender caresses. From all her form there came, though in a manner veiled, the desire for the man, the desire to make herself beloved of men.

In that room La Faustin emerged from the calm and security of the established things of her life, and entered into a nervous amiability, exerting an exciting grace and spirit of attack.

A courtesanesque change took place in her that, without a word on her part, gave her lover exquisite torture.

A big man breathing heavily burst in, and forcing his way to La Faustin, said in a bass voice, "Don't you know me?" Then her old companion of petty theatres of the suburbs began an intimate talk, in every phrase the familiar "thou." At one "thou" Lord Annandale broke a graceful cup between his nervous fingers.

"Oh! how clumsy. He has broken my pretty cup that came from Mllc. Clairon's sale," said La Faustin.

"I will give you another, dearest, more beautiful."

"Ah! these rich people. They think they can replace everything with money. You will give me one in gold?"

The fat man suggested a repairer of faïence, but Lord Annandale stared him down, and ho, left.

"Yes, my handsome lord, you are very clumsy and not very pleasant to-day," said La Faustin, upset a little at her old comrade's visit, and seeking diversion in a scene, half kiss, half cry, such as women create so well on these occasions.

"Juliette . . . to-day, your face, your voice for others . . . then when I hear a man say thou to you it overmasters me. I long to kill him!"

"Then, my friend, it was an unhappy idea of yours to love a woman of the theatre."

At this moment Ragache passed the halfopened door, and said, "Beautiful lady, may one come in?"

Lord Annandale closed the door brutally, and said, "Pardon, I am talking business with madam." Then regretting, he turned to his mistress and asked if the man should be called back with excuses.

The actress shrugged her shoulders, then leaning over her lover, said, "My friend, are you becoming mad?"

- "I am simply jealous."
- . " Jealous of whom?"
 - "Of all the world!"
 - "Of the public even, perhaps?"
 - "Yes, even of the public."
 - "Then demand of me that I leave the theatre to-night."

- "Juliette, I demand nothing. If I suffer it is my affair, mine only."
- A warning theatre bell prevented La Faustin's reply.

XXXV

LA FAUSTIN is in a long chair, half dressed. Preoccupied, she does not respond to the caressing touches of Lord Annandale, who at last opens an English paper with enough reading in it to last a week.

"Do you not know," said the actress, knocking the paper down, "the theatre is everything to me? I could not live through the day if I could not play at night. Do you think I can abandon my career as one would abandon a shop?"

"I have never asked this of you, Juliette."

"Not in set terms. Ah, my dear, in spite of the love I have for you, I should have to say a thousand times no."

Lord Annandale protested that he did not wish her to leave the stage.

"Yes, but if every time I play you are like a mute, if I am a little friendly with some one, you have all the tortures of jealousy. . . . Do you think it is amusing to have by one's side a man 'whose suffering is like a perpetual reproach?"

La Faustin had an attack of nerves, and made all the replies of her lover express the opposite meaning.

XXXVI

LA FAUSTIN was reading the tragedy of Andromache, in which she was to take the part of Hermione.

Lord Annandale entered the saloon and began talking of another Englishman, a friend who loved an actress in Paris and longed to be wedded to her.

"Your countrymen only love actresses, then;

but do you believe that they love them for themselves? No; it is talent that they love in their mistresses. The cry of the crowd, the applause of the press! You are like all the others. If I left the theatre, at the end of six months you would cease to love me. Bah! Let us go out. Take me to dinner at a restaurant, and to-night let us go to some little theatre."

XXXVII

"YOU are a little late, dearest, to-night," said Lord Annandale. "Juliette, you are lovely this evening. That dress suits you amazingly. You are charming."

She was dressed in black, a favourite colour, covered with lace; her bodice open, to give a glimpse of her white breasts. It was after dinner, and they were seated in the saloon. Suddenly she rose, and passing an arm around

the neck of her lover, said to him, "Here is the copy of the letter that I sent this morning to the director of the Comédie Française. The evening papers have it also by now."

"You have done this for me—abandoned your successful life. Have you reflected?"

"No. Reflection is not good in affairs of the heart." .

"Julictte, do you consent to be my wife?"

"No, my friend, it is not possible."

"I beg of you," said her lover, kneeling and covering her hands with kisses.

"My friend, we were not born for the positions of honoured wives. We can but be mistresses, and I will be yours for as long as you wish."

• She drew him to her bosom, and then said in a voice that she tried to render natural, "Be pleasant; let us talk of other affairs. We will leave Paris and spend some months abroad. To-night you are going to the English Embassy, and I want to visit my sister. You know I am looking forward to the morrow."

She prepared to go out. His lordship sat sadly in his chair. She returned to embrace him.

"Where do you wish to go to abroad?"

"Where you will."

XXXVIII

La Faustin's sister greeted her with an ironical expression. "So it is you. One hears quaint things about you. Still in love, at your age, and about to leave the stage for this Englishman."

"You know, my little Maria, each makes of life what each wishes to make. What about Carsonac?"

"Gone to Brussels." Then, in a bitter voice, "I have passed to other loves, the inferior ones. With a man of gentle birth there is always a trace of modesty, whilst with those I love now.

. . . For the great gross works of love the inferior folk are fittest."

She paced to and fro like a beast, then burst forth, "Oh! if I were in your place... Oh! the men, the men! Go, go! I do not want you to meet any man who is coming here."

XXXXIX

"YOU will accompany me, will you not, my friend?" said La Faustin to Lord Annandale, the day after the visit to her sister.

"I am entirely at your orders," he replied.

La Faustin took a little green book from the table, and then they entered a landau, which drove to a retired part of Paris, stopping before an old house that had placards stuck upon its walls and police at its doors, with many onlookers. It was the sale of the effects of a great actress, a tragedienne who had been, in her day, more famous than the woman who now came to see the sale.

Lord Annandale and his sweetheart mounted the broad staircase, and were then in a grand saloon, badly lit. Here were shown the clothes, etc., of the dead lady; clothes she wore as a woman and as a queen of the theatre. Robes for Phædra there were, robes for Hermione and Roxana, and, in addition, the dramatic relics, the pomp and circumstance of past and faded glory. Ever and anon one heard the raucous voice of a man saying, "Pass along, please, messieurs and mesdames."

In another room there was to be found gems and jewels, bound books and porcelain, silverware and glass—the silent witnesses of suppers unforgotten, unforgettable. Finally, one reached the bedroom, with its little ebony bed, blue-curtained and laced. In this room there was much talk of the names of the lovers of the actress, and no memory of the names of the parts she had played.

"Pass along, messieurs and mesdames," said ao voice eternally.

"Even as all must pass," said La Faustin sadly.

"Why did you come? Do you wish to secure something?" said the young lord.

"The whole of Paris has come, but it is a sad spectacle, and you seem to be quite unnerved by it."

La Faustin smiled, and, taking a hand of Lord Annandale's between her hands, said "You men really do not understand many things, for instance, why I came here to-day. But it is to aid me to understand the death of the tragedienne, and what it means when that death shall come to me. Yes, I have willed it that this experience shall be my last memory of Paris. Now I will leave and go abroad."

XL

FIFTEEN days from then the two lovers were installed in Lindau at the Villa Isemburg, upon the shores of the Lake of Constance. They lived and loved beneath the shadow of blue mountains, and upon the edge of an inland sea

that at night was swept by a breeze. Their villa had been in former years the love-nest of a Count Isemburg and a Princess Frederick Wilhelmina of Hohenlohe, daughter of the Elector of Hesse. She was a charming woman who had been made very unhappy, and finally had been abandoned by her husband.

It was a vast place, with grounds running down to the lake, containing a Gothic chapel and a landing-place for a gondola. Behind the house was a little wood with arbours.

XLI

For people of the theatre the open-air life has a particular charm, heady as wine. Such men and women often living by day in the half-lights of rehearsals, and with only the gas of the night for their sun and the carpet for their turf, living their life surrounded by painted streets and forests. . . . These people are excited by natural life, they are filled with a charming headiness, as

a child might be who had tasted a little wine. They want to lie upon the mossy turf in a sweet sleep amid the silence of the woods, or gaze through an opening at the far horizon. And then at the hour of the lengthening of the shadows they still want to be out in the open.

It rained the day after the arrival of La Faustin at Isemburg, and she became downcast at the bad weather for about half-an-hour. Then, taking an umbrella, she went out.

XLII

"The Villa Isemburg, Lindau.
"One day in July.

"My LITTLE MARIA,

"Buried is tragedy; dead and done with. Later, they will not be able to say of me that when my last hour arrived I took a cab in order to go and devotedly contemplate the front

of the Théâtre Français. I want to tell you that the actress is dead and buried within my heart. I was not without some fear at the beginning of this present state of things. In the early days here I said to myself that my homesickness for the theatre would make this life repugnant. But that has not happened. I have not been affected by it at all.

"Most certainly, my dear sister, it is pleasant to receive applause, but you know the cost of that; truly it is paid for very dearly. At bottom, glory is only one of the stupidities of life, an exploitation of our good fortune, prompted by our imbecile vanity. An idea bred of the country and the fresh air, I seem to hear you say. To love, you see, is the best thing of all. For me to love truly and deeply is more dearly interesting than to produce effects. But old Guenegaud, who is here, continually recalls and mournfully regrets my past—continually says madam remembers this or that or, the other.

"It is very stylish here. Pleasant water and houses surrounded with great trees and plants. There is abundance of fresh fruits. As for the lord and master, what shall I say of him save

that I love him as passionately as of yore? My lord has not a very articulate love. But he is always on the watch to see if he can render any happiness to his beloved. You will remember my trouble with the Théâtre Français and the absurd indemnity that they asked of me. Lord Annandale paid everything, without saying one word to me. To pay one hundred thousand francs for my sake, rather than let me be made anxious, is a gentlemanly thing and worthy of love.

"I am perfectly happy, and I cat and sleep well. Send me news of Paris, and do not shrink from sending me news of the theatre also. Little Luzy is getting married, I think. Is it to the opera dancer with beautiful eyes and a large nose, whom you called 'the child of Love and Punchinello'?

".Your affectionate sister,

"JULIETTE.

"Are you going to Homburg this summer? If so, you must come and spend some days here with your sweetheart."

· XLIII

A LIFE of activity, coming and going from morning to night, on horse and afoot, a life of air and wind, exercise and good food—such was the life of the two lovers at Lindau.

In such a material existence, with good health and happiness, the woman became singularly beautiful. She was no longer La Faustin of the Théâtre Français, showing upon her charming face the mark of the unquiet, nervous life of great cities. She was another woman. The fatigue of the features, the shadows beneath the eyes had gone. Irony, too, had gone—lost in the happiness of the body. Her elegant figure acquired firmness and roundness. In the Villa Isemburg there came to the face of La Faustin the look of a young girl, with cheeks of carnation and cream, and with eyes of humid light.

XLIV '

THE shores of the lakes of Germany and of Switzerland offer the sightseer charming scenes at the steamboat piers. One day, when Juliette had let herself be taken a long way on horse-back by Lord Annandale, they stopped to see one of these disembarking scenes, a picture worthy of the touch of a Knaus. In a corner an old coach stood with a heap of trunks, while here and there came and went young travellers. Among the crowd a group of Swiss girls were standing silently in a circle, with the vague and spiritual looks that women have when in a church.

All at once, from the midst of these silent women a sad chant was heard, and, heedless of others, for a long time they emotionalized their hearers with the musical plaint of their sweet, strong voices. These songs made a great impression upon Juliette, who, not content with emptying her purse and her companion's also, gave the singers two or three little jewels she wore. Lord Annandale witnessed with astonish-

ment, not the generosity, but the feverish manner of the giver, and La Faustin said to him, with a grave smile, "I, too, have sung as those women have."

The emotion of this meeting held her, and seemed to have awakened a world of memories, all her past. She did not talk any more, but forced the pace homewards, and, too fatigued for supper, went to her room.

In the night her lover was awakened by the sound of words spoken in a high voice. It was La Faustin, who, in night attire only, and lit by moonbeams, was declaiming the words of Hermione—

"Where am I? What have I done? What have I yet to do? What transport holds me, or what sorrow devours me? Aimless I wander in this palace."

* * * ,* * *

La Faustin, when studying a part, was subject to slight fits of somnambulism, but Lord Annandale had never seen her before asleep and yet playing as though on the stage.

She looked superb in that spectral light repeating beautiful lines in her tragedienne tones. There was a touch of terror in the impersonation. The effect was as if a portion of a tragedy was being enacted by a spectre. So she played all the first scene, and waited a long time for the reply of Cleon. But no answering voice came, and a sense of impatience woke her. She then threw herself into her lover's arms, saying, "It is not my fault; it is not my fault. I have done all that I could do to prevent myself ever again being a tragedienne!"

XLV

FROM that day onwards the thoughts of La Faustin were not entirely confined to the villa, and, loving woman though she was, she did not live wholly in the present. A little of the past came back to her. She surprised herself by repeating lines formerly applauded by the public, and smiled in proud recollection of a glorious notice of herself. But all these mental

returns to the old theatre thoughts she tried to cast from her, but they came back at the hours when the will was weakest.

At night when her head rested upon her pillow these trembling and troubling images succeeded each other within the closed eyelids. In the morning she would awake, her head full of the idea of a new part that had been promised her in some midnight dream, and in the actual existence of which she had believed. In the day even, in what she heard and saw, La Faustin sought, in spite of herself, a theatrical effect. Her steps in the pathways of the park were reminiscent of a dramatic entry in a certain fifth act long popular at the Odéon.

All this did not touch or affect the woman's love for Lord Annandale, or injure the perfect happiness that she tasted at Lindau, but it was none the less the return of things to her brain that she had put away from her for two months. They were things she had forbidden herself to think of. In the presence of this obsession, that recalled to all her senses the old actress profession, she would cry out in anger, as though addressing some other person, "No, no! Have I not said that it is finished, finished!'

She read no longer the daily papers she had been used to, for fear that her eyes would at once search out the articles headed "Theatres," and she had flung into the lake a volume that had been sent to her from Paris. It was the work of an illustrious critic who had recently died. In it was republished some enthusiastic notices and analyses of her playing, her talent and her dramatic beauty.

XLVI

THE life they lived was a life designed for two people to live happily. It was without distractions, save riding and driving. The somewhat jealous love of Lord William still kept him fearful of the rest of the world, and in his grand villa the two lovers lived practically alone. One member of the establishment was an old Englishwoman, a little mad, or rather in a state of sweet, smiling imbecility. She was a person of

the most extraordinary ugliness that one can imagine, and full of all sorts of curious little prudish ways.' The few phrases she pronounced in French were preceded by an aoh which prolonged itself in a series of cavernous and droll intonations that seemed as though they would never finish. This droll only appeared at their repasts or for the making of tea, and then she disappeared, going to a room chosen as far away as possible from the other dwellers in the villa. There, without hastening or resting, and like all earnest British women, she played the piano all the hours she could, without possessing the least ear or musical aptitude. With iron fingers she produced an implacable sort of music. It was less like that produced by a human being than by a mill for making rows, kept going by a steam engine. During this noisy exhibition the pianist had upon her caricature of a face the ecstatic look of Saint Cecilia seeing the heavens opening to her gaze. Beneath those terrible big fingers the piano was so, often put out of order that an old tuner had been engaged, and she gave him some work to do every day. The eccentric old girl had a collection of gorgeous night-caps -her only coquetry. She was so ugly in bed

that she feared if the house caught fire the firemen would not try to save her, thinking that they beheld the devil himself.

XLVII

THE only man whom they received at the villa, and who often stayed for many days, was a secretary of the English Legation in Bavaria. He was a fishing diplomat, and would have refused the finest post obtainable if it was in a country where the rivers were ill stocked with fish. Political, military, religious and commercial questions interested him not at all. His entire thoughts were for the fishes. In the evening, after a day passed upon the lake, he could be seen silently making flies, and one day he made a water-rat.

XLVIII

SOME time after the villa had another visitor, whom Lord Annandale introduced to La Faustin as a countryman of his, with a rather original style of his own.

They found him there one day on returning from a walk, installed in the house and refreshing himself while waiting for dinner with brandy, which he held with a trembling hand. He soon began to talk in an enthusiastic way of the songs of the skalds, the old poems of the North; and the way they had lingered in the minds of men. Though he spoke in very incorrect French, he astonished La Faustin, who had thought he would turn out to be merely a well-born drunkard. They dined, and drinking all through the dinner brandy instead of wine, with a little soup and salad only, the Honourable George Selwyn talked upon the politics of Germany, the English diplomats abroad, the saloons of Vienna, the plays of Racine and Corneille—formulating the opinions of a statesman, telling tales, letting fall words of deep wisdom, drawing from his memory quotations and phrases without end. He showed an extraordinary amount of knowledge upon the subject of the literature of Europe; and all this talk of his was given without a symptom of intoxication and in French that became more clear as he went on—became, in fact, incisive, wicked, and often atrociously indiscreet.

The Honourable George Selwyn awoke La Faustin's interest and her curiosity. The man was still young, but with a face that gave indications of the life he had led. He was well dressed and wore a coat-flower that was very richly scented. His dried-looking hands ended in little fingers with long nails.

There was about him a number of things that displeased, in spite of the seduction of his intelligence: the large head, the face that seemed to be that of an old woman, the perpetual grin. Among his black locks of hair was a white lock. He said all his family had one, and he arranged it with a certain affectation. In the drawing-room he continued to talk with the air of a specialist and expert upon the most diverse topics, and, among other things, of the amberscented pastilles of Marshal Richelieu. He had obtained the receipt from Cadet Gassicourt—a

receipt that in a voyage to the East had been the means of his seeing a heap of things that the other "dogs of Christians" had never seen, thanks being due to certain old pashas, who were rejuvenated by this importation from the Court of Louis XV.

Whilst talking he had mechanically advanced his hand towards some smelling-salts belonging to La Faustin. They were in a beautiful thing, a cut gem. But as she offered it to him he pressed it back, saying, to her astonishment, that he would break it, and adding, "Yes; I suffer from a particular, a peculiar malady. When I take into my hand a precious thing, that I know. to be precious, a bizarre thing happens to me and it. The reflex action of the brain, transmitting its will to the muscles that grasp, seems to send a counter order, a negation of the action willed. This leads to an impotence in me. I let the precious thing fall, and crash . . . it is in a thousand pieces. It is, so the doctors say, the preponderance of the brain annihilated by the nerve system of the spine.

"But notice; if the thing is not precious I can hold it safe. It is a momentary muscular paralysis. I am, in fact, an interesting patho-

logical case in this respect, and my friend, Dr. Burnett, is honouring me with a notice in his next work, Nerve Troubles."

XLIX

In the evening hours the soul of La Faustin was really now in the Rue Richelieu. She saw herself leaving her carriage, escorted by Ravaud, and once more the journals had her name daily, nightly, in their pages.

In reverie still she passed the doorkeeper of her Paris place, and mounted the stairs. Now again she was in her dressing-room, repeating a part with her sister, or perhaps the prompter, the prey of an emotion at once sweet and troublesome, and renewed each night. Around her graceful limbs the tragedienne's robes again fell, and beneath her feet she felt the boards of the stage. She saw the old Duchess of Taillebourg and the Marquis of Fontebise in the

audience. Then she felt the hush and, after, heard the applause! And her face in these moments was feverish, the nostrils wide, the eyes those of one treading the boards of the stage.

"You are silent. Of what are you thinking, Juliette?" her lover said.

"Of nothing, dear. Ah, it is long past nine."
The time recalled that moment when she entered in the second act of *Phædra*.

In spite of resistance, efforts, struggles, the master passion had again entered her soulthe theatre. The seductions of a career of glory, of vanity daily satisfied, held her-all the many charms and secret bonds of a profession that, no matter how unprofitable, holds one as with chains. In spite of her good fortune and her love, she wearied of her calm life. Made by nature for the theatre, her long rest chaféd and her theatrical spirit rebelled. She felt vanguished. And all this while Lord Annandale pressed the question of marriage, only to be refused. She felt sure within herself that the day his love passed she would return to the theatre, and wished to be free to do so when the day came.

L

"AFTER all, what is your friend Selwyn?"

This question was addressed by La Faustin to Lord Annandale after his friend had departed for Munich

"George Selwyn is . . . a man of love affairs and of unruly appetite. A great, a very great mind, of immense knowledge. He is an old friend of my youthful days. But are you going out to-day, Juliette?"

She answered no, and his lordship made for the stables.

La Faustin sat wondering what could be the ties that bound her lover to the Honourable George Selwyn. And her memories then went back to the first period of her *liaison* with the young English lord. There came back to her a night in Scotland, when her lover at her feet had thanked her for the great gift of her love. He said her love had saved him from evil debauches and friendships. Selwyn leapt to her mind as the evil genius of Annandale's early life. For had she not heard him talk? His

ferocious croticism and theories of love had something of the assassin about them. And now that Selwyn was with them her lover did not get to her arms until after interminable talks with Selwyn after dinner. It was as if the inflamed words of his friend poured an aphrodisiac into his veins. She had a little fear now of this love of Annandale's, of his frenzy—a passion that could scarcely be appeased. Formerly, under the influence of pleasure and passion, the young nobleman's face still had a gracious look. But now there came a strong expression, almost cruel. . .

LI

WITH the autumn and the falling leaves La Faustin was the victim of an anxious sadness, and a fear of the future. And the people with whom she lived—the old Englishwoman and Selwyn—seemed troubling and alarming beings of a macabre kind of humanity, rather fearsome.

And even the big six-foot lackeys seemed to give her the idea that she did not live in a real world, but in one evilly fantastic. In these days she would wander through the shadows of the house, opening the drawers of cabinets and thinking that the house she lived in was going to bring ill-luck, that it was a fatal house.

LII

A LETTER came for Selwyn and he left the villa. The *tête-à-tête* life of the lovers began again. The departure of Selwyn had freed La Faustin from many secret, unrestful thoughts. Lord Annandale had proposed that they spend the winter in Italy, and their thoughts were full of the project. They were going to travel post with their own carriage and horses, and they mapped the future voyage. At one place he was going to buy her a certain ring. At another there was an old church not usually known to

travellers. At another place they were to eat a fish the place was famous for, and then there would be views of all the places to be bought.

The old Englishwoman had already started for England, where she was going to stay while the lovers were away. The packing of the trunks now began, and the date of the departure was fixed for the early days of the coming week.

LIII

In the heavy, slumberous air of the bedchamber Lord Annandale rose one morning to let in some of the freshness of the dawn that was lighting the curtains. He went towards the window with soft steps, tried to open it, then cried out in a feeble voice, "Juliette, come to me, come to me!"

Wakened from out of her deep sleep, Juliette saw her lover at the window trying to keep steady but about to fall. She leapt up, and running towards him, flung her arms around him. Upheld by her, he tried to regain his bed but failed, and she felt him sinking, falling. She cried out, but none heard, and her burden prevented her reaching the bell to ring. At last, with all her force, by a terrible effort and moving very slowly she managed to get the sick lord upon his bed again. He did not at once regain his senses, but lay stretched, corpse-like, and in his open eyes a terrible, fixed look. And then days succeeded days, while the young lord lay stricken with this strange and terrible malady, carefully watched by a doctor.

LIV

In the full happiness of an existence of love for two, how horrible the thought that in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, the eternal separation and the brutal entry of the idea of Death!.... And this at the early phase of a love that

promised to be "cternal," and was now but a year old. La Faustin in the days passed by the dying was as one stunned and mutely in revolt against God and Providence. In her saddened mind there was always the coming and going of a great uncertainty, for the doctor had not as yet uttered the death sentence. But from all the corners of the unhappy sick-room low voices seemed to say, Death, Death, Death.

LV

THE chamber in which Lord Annandale was lying upon his splendid bed was a large one, furnished in a massive antique style. Seated at the foot of the bed, La Faustin cried, her head hid in the coverings. She did not hear the doctor enter, and barely caught his words, "Ah, yes, it is beginning."

"Oh, my God!... What did you say?" burst from her.

"Courage, madam," answered the doctor.

La Faustin took hold of the hands of Lord William, and tried by her caresses to pacify his restless hands.

The doctor left, saying that he would return soon.

Involuntarily, against her will, the face of La Faustin copied the dying spasms of her lover. Suddenly the eyes of the dying man met her eyes full. Knowledge of all his surroundings seemed to have come to him as by a miracle. . . . At that moment some domestic servants entered the chamber.

"Turn that woman out!" cried the young lord, in a voice that revealed all the implacability of the Saxon race.

La Faustin pressed her mouth to the hands of her lover. He repulsed her brutally, with these werds, "An artist . . . that is all that you are . . . the woman incapable of loving!"

Then, burying his face in his bed to die, Lord Annandale flung forth a second time and more imperatively the words, "Turn that woman out!"

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